

PLATO'S *LYSIS*

The *Lysis* is one of Plato's most engaging but also puzzling dialogues; it has often been regarded, in the modern period, as a philosophical failure. The full philosophical and literary exploration of the dialogue illustrates how it in fact provides a systematic and coherent, if incomplete, account of a special theory about, and special explanation of, human desire and action. Furthermore, it shows how that theory and explanation are fundamental to a whole range of other Platonic dialogues and indeed to the understanding of the corpus as a whole. Part One offers an analysis of, or running commentary on, the dialogue. In Part Two Professors Penner and Rowe examine the philosophical and methodological implications of the argument uncovered by the analysis. The whole is rounded off by an epilogue on the relation between the *Lysis* and some other Platonic (and Aristotelian) texts.

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PLATO'S *LYSIS*

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521791304

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First published in print format 2005

ISBN-13 978-0-511-18267-9 eBook (MyiLibrary)

ISBN-10 0-511-18267-8 eBook (MyiLibrary)

ISBN-13 978-0-521-79130-4 hardback

ISBN-10 0-521-79130-8 hardback

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‘It is *this* that a person will love most of all – when he holds the same things to be beneficial to *it* as to himself, and when he thinks that if *it* does well, he himself will do well, and if not, the opposite’: Socrates in Plato’s *Republic* (IV.412d4–7)

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Preface

'They say, too, that when Socrates heard Plato reading the *Lysis*, he said "Heracles! How many lies the young man tells about me!"' (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* III,35) This apocryphal story – apocryphal, if only because Socrates was surely dead before the *Lysis* was written – might perhaps be taken as an ancient counterpart of one typical modern reaction to the *Lysis*: that it misrepresents Socrates. In particular, so the *modern* story goes, it misrepresents him by making him into a kind of sophist, the sort that uses any means down to and including mere trickery in order to defeat his opponents (in this case a pair of teenagers; a particularly pointless and silly exercise, then). Sometimes the dialogue has been declared not to be by Plato at all, so bad the arguments seemed to be; and even if the twentieth century tended to back off from that view, the general view was, and still remains, that the *Lysis* is not a philosophical success. Its ancient subtitle was 'On friendship' – or rather 'On *philia*', which already has wider connotations; on that subject, says the standard modern reading, what little the *Lysis* has to tell us, and so far as we can make it out, is mostly false.

The outcome of the present book is an absolute and complete rejection of that standard verdict – which, despite what may or may not be implied by any whisperings recorded by Diogenes, was certainly not standard in antiquity (a thesis for which we provide some evidence in our Epilogue). We – Penner and Rowe – began, four or more years ago, with the firm intention of following the Socrates of the *Lysis* every step of the way, to see just what we could make of his arguments if we supposed not only that he *thinks* they lead where he seems to claim they lead, but that there *actually are reasons* for each step that he takes, if only we could discover what those reasons are. Part of our game-plan was that we had also to be prepared to ditch our own presuppositions, in order to allow for the possibility that Socrates was starting from a different place altogether; equally, we agreed to suspend judgement about just what would be the right place, or places, to start from. (In any case, we continued to discover radical

and fundamental philosophical disagreements between ourselves – even if we have almost always ended by resolving them.) The process proved simultaneously painful and exhilarating.

The results, as they emerged, surprised even us. What we found, and what we describe at length in Part I below, is, first, a dialogue – a philosophical conversation – that pursues a single line of argument from beginning to end; an argument, moreover, that is fully integrated with its literary and dramatic frame. The analysis in Part I covers the characterization and action of the dialogue, its tone and tempo, with every bit as much care as it does the detail of the philosophical discussion itself, because all aspects work together, and none is fully intelligible without the others. The second thing that we found is an argument that springs from, describes, and partly justifies a specific theory – not just about friendship, but about love, including and especially the ‘romantic’ sort, and desire, all of which turns out to be treated together under the umbrella of *philia*. It is a theory, indeed, about what drives our actions in general. This theory we discuss in Part II, along with the lessons we have learned in the course of our extended encounter with the *Lysis* about the way Plato needs to be read. (We make no apology for suggesting that those lessons have an application beyond the one short dialogue which is our immediate subject.)

So far from being a failure, the *Lysis* is in our view a piece of virtuoso philosophical writing, a miniature when set beside other, grander, and acknowledged masterpieces, but nevertheless showing the ‘divine’ Plato at the very top of his form. It is quite able to stand on its own, and is not some kind of sketch for the *Symposium*, or for the *Phaedrus*, both of which, despite being more than two-and-a-half times longer than the *Lysis*, stand at least as much in need of being filled out from the *Lysis* as it can be filled out from them. This is one of the claims we make in our Epilogue, which proposes the larger thesis that the *Lysis* in effect sets the agenda not just for *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, but even for Aristotle in his treatments of *philia* in his *Eudemian* and *Nicomachean Ethics*. With *Phaedrus* and *Republic* Plato sets his face against a key part of the theory of the *Lysis*, and his pupil Aristotle moves still further away from it; yet the starting-points of these subsequent discussions remain recognizably those proposed by that diminutive dialogue which moderns are so ready to dismiss. Nor does the influence of the *Lysis*, or of the ideas it represents, stop there.

The reader who expects an implicit dialogue between us and other modern readers of the *Lysis* will be disappointed. Many other scholars have seen (what we take as being) parts of what Plato is about in the *Lysis*, without grasping (what we take to be) the whole; such readers, we claim, resemble

the characters Lysis and Menexenus in the dialogue. The two boys understand what is going on, to slightly different degrees, but then finally lose it, reverting to the position they first started from without at the same time wanting to give up what they have agreed on since. (The dialogue is thus partly *about*, and *speaks to*, different levels of understanding; and insofar as these different levels of understanding represent different positions, it is also a dialogue *between positions* as much as it is a dialogue between interlocutors.) So Lysis and Menexenus see something, but not enough to allow them to see *what it amounts to*. The case of many modern interpreters seems to us analogous: since they lack a grasp of the whole to which the parts relate, and which *explains* the parts, their readings tend to run into the sand, taking the dialogue along with them. The consequence is that in a high proportion of cases, while our own interpretation may seem to overlap with that of others, the overlap is in a way accidental rather than substantial; and where we think others get the *Lysis* wrong, the best response is in any case to expound our view of the whole. So even if our brief had not been to offer a fresh and independent approach to the dialogue, we would still have engaged in relatively little open conversation with other interpreters.

Now in case this should sound like arrogance on our part, we should not hide the fact that on innumerable occasions – as we tried to tease out Socrates' development of his argument – we felt ourselves close to giving up, and just throwing in the towel. The sheer length of the analysis in Part I is some testimony to our struggle with the text; many parts of a dialectic now aimed at the reader started life as arguments with ourselves or each other. The friends of Lysis' lover Hippothales complain that he deafens them with repeating his darling's name; Rosemary Penner and Heather Rowe have had something of the same problem with us, as we wrestled with the *Lysis* day after day (and not infrequently during sleepless nights). We are grateful to them for not giving up on *us*. Meanwhile, we take the eventual agreement between the two of us on the interpretation of each detail, and the whole, of the dialogue to be some small evidence that that interpretation is viable.

Even our bibliography will be selective. We have included only (a) those items to which we specifically refer in the main text and the footnotes, and (b) those items which we can actually remember having found helpful, either in a positive sense or because they helped us crystallize our own rather different understanding of the text and its complexities. At the same time we have been helped by discussions with numerous individuals and audiences: in, among other places, Toronto, on the Irvine and San Diego campuses of the University of California; in Athens (where we attempted,

but failed, to follow the course of the walk Socrates was taking from the Academy to the Lyceum when he got diverted into the conversation of the *Lysis*), Delphi, and at the Olympic Centre for Philosophy in Granitseïka (Pyrgos); in Naples and Piacenza; in London, Paris, and Louvain-la-Neuve; and always in Durham (UK) and Wisconsin–Madison. We offer our warm thanks to all our *philoī*, including our wives, for their help and support; to one other special *philos*, Mary Margaret McCabe, for being the model editor, permissive about deadlines but sharp as ever about the important things; and to the Leverhulme Trust, who – in the shape of a Personal Research Professorship – provided Rowe with vital time to help complete a project that might otherwise have taken another four years, in addition to the four or more it actually took, to reach closure.

PART I

An analysis of the Lysis

CHAPTER I

203AI–207B7: the cast assembles, and the main conversation is set up

We begin with a largely uninterrupted translation of the opening few pages of the *Lysis*, which serve to introduce and set the scene for the main argument. (For subsequent sections of the dialogue, our method will have some resemblance to a running commentary.) We shall provide, in footnotes to the translation, some preliminary comments on details of this first section of the dialogue, but for the most part we shall delay discussion of major points until after our analysis of the argument of the rest of the *Lysis* (see chapter 9). We begin with the expectation, though the proof of the pudding will be in the eating, that the design of the opening scene will have at least something to do with the concerns of that argument.

203AI I was on my way from the Academy straight to the Lyceum along the road that runs outside the wall, under the wall itself; but when I'd got to the small gate where the spring of Panops is, there I chanced on Hippothales son of Hieronymus and Ctesippus of the Paeania deme and other young lads (*neaniskois*) **203A5** with them, all standing in a group. And when Hippothales caught sight of me coming towards them, he said ‘Socrates! Where is it you're on your way to, and **203B1** where from?’

‘From the Academy,’ I said; ‘I'm on my way straight to the Lyceum.’

‘Come straight here to us,’ he said. ‘Won't you come over? It really will be worth your while.’

203B5 ‘Where do you mean,’ I said, ‘and who are the “us” you want me to come over to?’

‘I mean here,’ he said, showing me just over from the wall a kind of precinct with its door standing open; ‘and the ones passing our time there are those of us here now and others as well – quite a lot of them, and beauties too.’

204AI ‘So what is this place, and how do you pass your time?’

‘It's a wrestling-school,’ he said, ‘one just recently built; we spend most of our time in discussions (*logoi*), and would gladly make you a part of them.’

‘Fine,’ I said, ‘if you do that; but who's teaching there?’

204A5 ‘It's actually a friend (*hetairos*) of yours,’ he said, ‘and an admirer – Miccus.’

‘Zeus!’ I said; ‘definitely no mean person (*ou phaulos*);¹ in fact a fair professional when it comes to wisdom.’²

‘So are you prepared to follow us,’ he said, ‘so you can see for yourself those who are there?’³

204B1 ‘Before that I’d like to be told what I’ll be going in *for*, and who the beauty is.’⁴

‘One of us thinks it’s one person, Socrates,’ he said, ‘another another.’

‘But who do *you* think it is, Hippothales? This is what you should tell me.’

204B5 At that question he blushed. And I said ‘Son of Hieronymus, Hippothales, *this* you don’t need to tell me – whether you’re in love with (*erais*) someone or not;⁵ for I know that you’re not only in love (*erais*), but already pretty far along in your love (*porrō edē ei poreuomenos tou erōtos*).⁶ I am, myself, of mean ability (*phaulos*), **204C1** indeed useless (*achrēstos*), in respect to everything else, but this much has been given me – I don’t know how – from god, the capacity to recognize (*gignōskein*) quickly a lover and an object of love (*eronta te kai erōmenon*).⁷

¹ There seems no pressing need to adopt Schanz’s *hanēr* (i.e. *ho anēr*) for the manuscripts’ *anēr* here in 204A6.

² This rather elaborate rendering of the two Greek words *bikanos sophistēs* seems justified by the slipperiness of the second. In Plato, calling someone a ‘sophist’ (*sophistēs*: the form of the word suggests something like ‘professional wise person’) is not usually meant as a compliment (see, for example, Socrates’ warnings at the beginning of the *Protagoras* to the young Hippocrates about the dangers of associating with people – sophists – like Protagoras; though cf. also the partial defence of the sophists against Anytus at *Meno* 89E–95A2, esp. 91B2–92E6). Here, however (on the surface), the term seems to be used in a purely descriptive way; and that – so we take it – is the point: Miccus professes, and teaches, wisdom, and wisdom or knowledge will be one of the chief themes of the main part of the *Lysis*. (Nails 2003 has him down, on the basis of the present passage, as a wrestling-teacher; if that is right, his ‘wisdom’ will consist in his expertise in wrestling. Was he perhaps one of the professional types Socrates examined in his search, sparked off by the Delphic oracle, for someone wiser than himself? But see further n. 57 to Chapter 5 below.) The fact that Miccus neither subsequently appears in person in the *Lysis* nor is even mentioned again is probably sufficient indication of Socrates’ actual opinion of him. Wisdom and knowledge, however, will be among the central subjects of the dialogue, if not *the* central subject.

³ As it will turn out, Hippothales has a special reason for emphasizing autopsy: it’s the sight of his own beloved (*Lysis*) that matters most to *him*. One of the questions that Socrates will introduce early on will be whether Hippothales has got his priorities right. Socrates’ own interest in *Lysis* will be quite different; whether or not it will count as an ‘erotic’ interest will depend on whether it is being looked at from Hippothales’ or from Socrates’ point of view (Socrates’ view of the ‘erotic’ will be somewhat different from Hippothales’: see e.g. n. 7 below).

⁴ Socrates immediately picks up what Hippothales is up to; it’s not ‘discussions’ (*logoi*, 204A3) that interest Hippothales, but something (someone) else.

⁵ Socrates addresses Hippothales in mock-formal fashion (‘Son of Hieronymus, Hippothales’): there’s no point in his even trying to deny that – lit. ‘don’t any longer say whether . . .’ – he’s in love.

⁶ The translation ‘pretty far along in it’ misses the relatively unusual construction of the Greek, one that parallels the English continuous present (‘you’re *going* far along in it’ would be closer). We should probably notice that the verb used is the same as the one that occurs as first word in the dialogue: *poreuesthai*, also echoed at 203B2; should we somehow or other be connecting Hippothales’ ‘journey’ in love with Socrates’ real one?

⁷ All that Socrates will be doing here, at least as far as someone like Hippothales is concerned, is finding an elegant way of saying that *anyone* could tell that Hippothales is hopelessly in love; and certainly the reference to a gift from the gods – one given, as Socrates says, ‘I don’t know how’, or ‘somehow

When he heard me say this he blushed much more deeply still. At that Ctesippus said ‘So very charming of you to blush, Hippothales, 204C5 and to be coy about telling Socrates the name! But if he passes even a little time with you, he’ll be worn out by your saying it over and over again. At any rate, Socrates, he’s deafened our 204D1 ears by stuffing them with “Lysis”; and then again if he has a bit of a drink,⁸ there’s every chance we’ll wake up in the middle of the night too, thinking we’re hearing “Lysis”. And as terrible as the things are that he says in ordinary conversation, they are hardly terrible at all compared with the poems that he tries 204D5 to pour over our heads, and the bits of prose. And what’s more terrible than these is that he even *sings* to his beloved, in an extraordinary voice that *we* have to put up with listening to. Now you ask him the name, and he blushes!’

204E1 ‘And Lysis, it seems,’ I said, ‘is some young person; I’m guessing, because I didn’t recognize (*gignōskein*) the name when I heard it.’

‘Right,’ he [Ctesippus] said, ‘people don’t mention his own name all that much; instead he’s still called by his patronymic because his father is so widely 204E5 known (*gignōskein*). Because I’m sure there’s little chance of your not knowing (*agnoein*) what the boy looks like [his *eidos*]; he’s good-looking enough to be known (*gignōskein*)⁹ just from that alone.’

or other’: *pōs* – must be ironic. Socrates detects that Hippothales is in love from the fact that he blushes (there are three references to blushing in quick succession: 204B5, C3, C4), and to be able to see that blushing, in response to the question ‘And who do *you* find a beauty?’, is a sign that someone is in love is not much of a gift. (Later on, in 216D–217A, Socrates will talk in a similar way of having a kind of ‘prophetic insight’ – talk which undoubtedly represents little more than a marker for the introduction of a point not, so to speak, organically produced from an interlocutor other than the useless/ignorant Socrates. That the gods are really meant to have had much to do with his expertise on lovers/beloveds is, we suggest, equally in doubt here in 204B–C.) But there is a little more to what Socrates is saying. Take, first, T’m of mean ability, *phaulos*, indeed useless, in everything else’: this general profession of ignorance evidently puts him at a disadvantage with Miccus (not *phaulos*, indeed a *hikanos sophistēs*, Socrates said at A6). Hippothales, and we, will no doubt take this too as ironic; but whether, or to what extent, that is the appropriate reaction will require the rest of the *Lysis* to show. As for the particular capacity Socrates does claim to have, of ‘recogniz[ing] quickly a lover and an object of love’, a central feature of the situation with Hippothales is that Socrates can only tell who the lover is, not who it is that is loved: at this point in the action, he certainly doesn’t know, and has no way of knowing, that it’s Lysis. In reaching any final conclusions about what to make of the claim in question, we shall need to take into account certain later developments in the dialogue. Most importantly, we shall find Socrates arguing that *erōs*, in common with any sort of desire, will involve more than a simple relationship between lover and beloved as ordinarily understood. (It will turn out that the true beloved is always *the good* – and also, as it happens, that *everyone* is a lover, insofar as everyone loves the good; to that extent Socrates’ claim to be able to recognize one loving may be quite as complex as his claim to be able to recognize the one loved.) Another idea in the passage that will play a role later on is the association of ignorance with uselessness (see 207B8–210D8, *passim*).

⁸ The same verb (*hupopinein*) will be used at the end of the dialogue, of the slaves who look after the boys Lysis and Menexenus (223B1).

⁹ The repeated use of *gignōskein* (with *agnoein* in 204E5) looks significant, coming as it does after Socrates’ remark about the one thing he can *gignōskein*, i.e. lover and object of love, and in light of the fact that Lysis actually is the beloved (the one Socrates couldn’t in fact *gignōskein* at 204C) in this case. Cf. n. 7 above.

'Please let me be told whose son he is,' I said.

'Democrats,' he said, 'from the deme of Aexone – Lysis is his eldest son.'¹⁰

'Well now,' I said, 'Hippothales, how noble and dashing **204E10** a love this is that you've discovered, from every point of view!¹¹ So¹² come on, give me just the displays **205AI** you give these people here, so that I can establish whether you know¹³ the things a lover should say¹⁴ about a beloved to him or to others.'¹⁵

'But do you attach weight, Socrates,' he said, 'to any of the things this person says?'

'Are you denying,' I said, 'even that you're in love with the one "this person" says?'

205A5 'No, I'm not,' he [Hippothales] said, 'but I do deny that I write poetry to my beloved, or put things in prose to him.'

'He's not well,' said Ctesippus; 'he's delirious, raving!'

And I said 'Hippothales, I'm not for a moment asking to hear **205B1** your *verses*, or any *song* you may have composed to the young lad (*neaniskos*); what I'm asking

¹⁰ Father–son relationships will play a not inconsiderable role in the succeeding argument, as will questions about the importance of age and beauty – and also of power: we should perhaps note that 'Democrats' is literally 'People-Power'. Lysis' beauty and parentage will already be enough to explain his being chosen for what will be the role of one of the two main interlocutors in the dialogue. Lysis' tombstone, probably dating from before the end of the second quarter of the fourth century, has been found; he appears to have married well – hardly a surprise, given what Plato says in the *Lysis* about his family. On other people in the dialogue: Nails 2003 has rather little to offer us about Menexenus, but he turns up as Socrates' sole interlocutor in another of Plato's dialogues (the *Menexenus*), and in light of the fact that one of Socrates' sons had the same name 'it is natural to wonder whether he might be related to Socrates' family' (Nails 2003: 202). About Hippothales we know absolutely nothing, though a Hippothales turns up in Diogenes Laertius III.46 – 'perhaps on the basis of this dialogue', Nails 2003: 174 – as a pupil of Plato's. Nails makes Lysis 'apparently [only] slightly younger than him', on the basis that both are called *neaniskoi* (Hippothales at 203A, Lysis at 205B1; Lysis is then *pais*, 'boy', at B8). But to the extent that (a) *neaniskos* is a pretty imprecise description (the application of which will often depend on context, the age of the speaker, and so on), and (b) it may not be quite certain that Socrates means to treat Hippothales as a *neaniskos* at 203A (see LSJ s.v. *allos*, II.8: 'Hippothales and Ctesippus and young lads besides/with them?'), this is not a certain inference. Hippothales at any rate is no 'boy'; he *may* be the same age as Ctesippus, Menexenus' cousin, who is the one who uses this word of Lysis. But we know hardly anything more about Ctesippus, either, than we may learn from Plato's dialogues (for the most important context, in the *Euthydemus*, see Chapter 2, §1(c) below).

¹¹ 'Dashing' is an attempt to render *neanikos*, literally 'belonging to a young man', so 'youthful', 'fresh', 'flourishing', 'fine'; also 'impetuous', 'headstrong'. The immediate sense is probably given by the 'from every point of view': Socrates is responding to the news that Lysis is not only outstandingly beautiful, but (eldest) son of a famous father. But the very next sentence (do you, Hippothales know what a lover should say about a beloved?) marks the beginning of a process that will put in doubt how important such qualifications are in a beloved; see the analysis of the initial conversation between Socrates and Lysis in Chapter 2 below.

¹² 'So' for the Greek *kai* may appear a little odd; the aim is merely to convey the sense of *continuity* implied.

¹³ The verb is *epistamai*, a cognate of *epistēmē*, one of the commonest terms for 'knowledge', 'expertise'.

¹⁴ I.e. the sorts of things that an expert lover would say.

¹⁵ 'What a lover should say about a beloved to him or to others' will turn out, in a (so far unexpected) way, to be a possible description of the main part of the *Lysis*.

to hear is what your *thought* is,¹⁶ so that I can establish the way you're applying yourself to your beloved.'

'I'm sure he'll tell you,' he said; 'for he knows it in detail, 205B5 off by heart, if as he says he's deafened from hearing it from me.'

'Heavens above [By the gods]!' said Ctesippus; 'For sure I do. Because the things he says are ridiculous into the bargain, Socrates. He's a lover, with his mind fixed more than anyone else's on the boy, and yet he doesn't 205C1 have anything of his own [*idion*] to say that even – a *boy* couldn't say: is that ridiculous, or isn't it?¹⁷ But what the whole city celebrates, about Democrates, and Lysis, the boy's grandfather, and about all the boy's ancestors, things like wealth and racehorses and victories

¹⁶ I.e., what the thought is behind your verses/songs. What Socrates will suggest is that Hippothales is composing encomia to himself (205D5–6, E1–4), and in the process actually making his prey more difficult to catch (206A6–7). Hippothales protests (205D7–8) that he's *not* composing to himself: 'you don't *think* you are', replies Socrates (D9). It regularly happens to Socrates' interlocutors in the Platonic dialogues, as here with Hippothales, that what their thought is on any given topic emerges only after some considerable dialectic. (In fact, as Hippothales' response at 205B4–5 shows, he does not even properly understand Socrates' question.)

At this point we need to alert the reader to the fact that we think a major philosophical issue is involved here. How can it be said that Hippothales, unbeknownst to himself, is singing his own praises? How can it be that he doesn't realize that what he is saying (what he believes), when *apparently* saying something of the sort 'The boy I love is a paragon' is that he himself, Hippothales, is worthy of praise? (Incidentally, as the context indicates, the real subject of this sentence is not the boy Hippothales loves, but, *how one should speak to one's darling*.) Do people not *know* what the content is of their assertions or claims? Well, the question is whether 'the content of our assertions or claims' is to be taken in terms solely of *what we mean* by the sentences asserted (what our sentences mean or say), or in terms of *the actual things and attributes that the different parts of the sentences (really) refer to* (what we, the speakers, presumably *intend* to be speaking of). We take up these issues in a more theoretical way in Chapters 10 and 11 below. For now, what we need to say is that it comes naturally – even to modern philosophers and logicians – to take what *we* are saying, i.e., what any of us is saying, by means of our sentences in terms of what we *mean* (this being in turn explained in terms of something called the 'logical powers' of the sentences in question: see Chapter 10, nn. 3, 17); and to suppose that in general we know what we mean (also, by virtue of 'knowing the language' that we know what our *sentences* mean); so that modern philosophers and logicians are as likely to be as surprised as Hippothales himself that Socrates should suppose that what Hippothales was actually doing in 'singing Lysis' praises' is actually singing his own praises. At any rate, departing from this approach – as we see it, with good reason: see Chapters 10 and 11 – Socrates takes people not even to be aware of what their thought *is* until it has been laid out for them by the process of dialectic. That process, through which he hopes to lay out what the speaker is saying by means of the original sentences under examination, is such that it may well turn out that there is no one coherent position the interlocutor holds, and so no one coherent assertion the interlocutor is making. If a baffled interlocutor, at the end of a dialectical examination at Socrates' hands, says or thinks 'By Zeus, I no longer know *what* I was saying,' we think this is exactly right. The dialectic, in the present case, will reveal that Hippothales really was singing his own praises, even if he didn't understand it at the time. (See nn. 26 and 33 below for the particular application of the idea to Hippothales' case.)

The point here is connected with what we call below, in Chapter 10, 'the principle of real reference'. (What is the real thing out there that the interlocutor intends to be picking out by means of his words?) Clarification of the line we take here is postponed to Chapter 10; for the moment, what matters is just that this seemingly banal context involves something philosophically important; and to add – our justification for the addition is also postponed – that on the philosophical point at issue, Socrates is right, and all too many modern philosophers and logicians are wrong.

¹⁷ In Greek idiom, 'how is it not ridiculous?' Ctesippus suggests that mere age brings wisdom; Lysis' (and Menexenus') performance later on ought to surprise him.

at the Pythian and 205C5 Isthmian and Nemean Games with the four-horse team and the single horse and rider – *that's* what he puts in the poems he recites, and stuff that's even older news than that. It was the reception given to Heracles that he was going through in some poem the day before yesterday – how because of their kinship with *Heracles* their ancestor 205D1 received *Heracles* as a visitor, the ancestor being himself descended from Zeus and the daughter of the founder of the deme; things old women sing about,¹⁸ and lots of other things of the same sort, Socrates. These are the things that this person talks and sings about, forcing us as well to be his audience.'

205D5 On hearing that, I said ‘Ridiculous Hippothales,¹⁹ are you composing and singing an encomium to yourself before you've won?’

‘But it's not to myself, Socrates,’ he said, ‘that I'm composing or singing.’

‘You certainly don't *think* so,’ I said.²⁰

205D10 ‘But how's that?’ he said.

205E1 ‘It's to you most of all,’ I said, ‘that these songs of yours refer. For on the one hand, if you catch your beloved when he's as you describe him, what you've said and sung will be an ornament to *you*, and truly encomia, as if you were the victor, for having succeeded with a beloved like that; but on the other hand, if he escapes you, 205E5 the greater the encomia you've uttered about your beloved, so much the greater the beautiful and good things²¹ you'll seem to have been deprived of, 206A1 and ridiculous as a result. So the person who's an expert [or 'wise': *sophos*] in erotics (*ta erōtika*), my friend (*philos*),²² doesn't praise the one he loves until he catches him, out of fear for how the future will turn out. And at the same time whenever anyone praises them and builds them up,²³ the beautiful ones get full of proud and arrogant thoughts; or don't you think so?’

206A5 ‘I do,’ he said.

‘Well, the more arrogant they are, the more difficult they become to catch?’

‘Yes, that's likely.’

¹⁸ So Hippothales' stuff is boyish/childish if it's ‘his own’, i.e. original, and ends up being old wives' tales if it's not.

¹⁹ Socrates picks up the adjective Ctesippus chose ('Ridiculous Hippothales') – but applies it for a different reason (205E4–206A1).

²⁰ In a way that would surprise many moderns as much as it surprises Hippothales, Socrates suggests that he (Socrates) knows better than Hippothales what Hippothales is affirming in ‘singing Lysis’ praises’. See n. 16 above, with n. 26 below.

²¹ The two adjectives used here, *kalos* and *agathos*, frequently go together as a pair, virtually making up a single word (thus at 207A3: Socrates, as narrator, describing Lysis) to denote people (or things) of the highest degree of quality – whatever quality is in question; but here, of course, in losing his beloved Hippothales would be losing something (someone) beautiful as well as something good for himself, or so everyone would say ('you'll *seem* . . .'), and he would certainly agree. (Later, the beautiful will apparently be identified with the good: see 216D2.)

²² The root *phil-*, connoting love/friendship, will be central to the *Lysis*; here is its first occurrence – though *hetairos*, which in some contexts can be used interchangeably with *philos*, has been used at 204A5, and most of the conversation so far has centred around *erōs* (denoting passionate, usually sexual, desire/love) and its cognates. It is in fact to *erōs* that the whole dialogue will ultimately return, if indeed it ever leaves it behind.

²³ I.e. adds to their reputation (*auxēi*).

'So what sort of hunter would it be, in your view, that started up 206A10 his prey and made it more difficult to catch?'

206B1 'Clearly, a poor (*phaulos*) one.'²⁴

'And what's more, to use words and songs on a subject not to soothe it but to drive it wild would be a matter of a distinct lack of musical ability, wouldn't it?'

'It seems so to me.'

206B5 'Watch out then, Hippothales, that you don't make yourself liable to all these things with your poetry-making. And furthermore, I myself think you wouldn't wish to (*ethelen*) concede that a man who's doing harm to himself with poetry is ever a good poet, in being harmful to himself.'²⁵

'Zeus! No indeed,' he said; 'that would be quite senseless. But these 206C1 are just the reasons, Socrates, that I'm telling you everything: if you've something else up your sleeve, give your advice about the line a person should take in conversation (*tina . . . logon dialogomenos*), or what he should do, to become an object of love for [prosphiles to] a beloved.'²⁶

'It's not easy to say,' I said. 'But if you were prepared to get 206C5 him to come and exchange words with me (*moi . . . eis logous elthein*), perhaps I'd be able to

²⁴ For the same adjective (*phaulos*), also of lack of expertise, see 204A6 (Miccus: 'no mean person; in fact a fair professional when it comes to wisdom'), 204B8 (Socrates: 'of mean ability', except when it comes to 'recogniz[ing] quickly a lover and an object of love').

²⁵ As it is put, this will look, to moderns, like something that neither Hippothales nor anyone else would have reason to agree with: why *shouldn't* one be a good poet, and still suffer bad consequences from one's poetry (as if it could be a necessary condition of any expertise that it not lead to any damage to oneself)? But although there is no *general* case for the poems of good poets always being beneficial to their authors, Hippothales precisely went into writing poetry because he thought to benefit himself from it. So *he* will have to agree that a good poet will not harm himself. Perhaps that is enough to explain the present point: that anyone who *thinks* it a good thing to indulge in poetry (or even to become a poet) will think poetry benefits the poet. See also our remarks, in Chapter 11, n. 24 below, in opposition to the modern treatment of 'good of its kind'. At the same time, it is not perhaps inconceivable that we are meant to do a double-take on *poein* in the sentence in question by reading it also as ' . . . I . . . think you wouldn't wish to concede that a man who's harming himself with/by *acting* [i.e. doing, *poiēsis*] is ever a good doer, in being harmful to himself': cf. *Symposium* 205B–C, where the two kinds of *poiēsis/poein* – po[i]etry, and doing/(making) – are explicitly set side by side. That 'no one goes wrong willingly' (*oudeis hekōn hamartanei*) is one of the best-known claims of Socrates (see e.g. *Apology* 25E–26A, *Protagoras* 345D–E, *Gorgias* 509E), though he would have no reason for expecting Hippothales to accept *that*, at any rate straight off ('I think you wouldn't wish to concede . . .'). Some readers, however, will no doubt regard this reading – exploiting a double take on *poein* – as too much of a stretch.

²⁶ Hippothales can reasonably be claimed to be setting up the theme of the *Lysis* here: the final conclusion to the main argument (or the closest to a final conclusion that it comes) will be that 'It's necessary . . . for the genuine lover, one who's not pretended, to be loved by his darling' (222A6–7). So all Hippothales has to 'do' is to be a genuine lover (and isn't he that already?). But leading up to that conclusion there will also, of course, be an extended example of the kind of line a lover should take in conversation with his intended – a line Hippothales would never have dreamed of on his own, but presumably in harmony with his 'thought' (205B2), if that has to do with his 'becoming an object of love to [his] beloved' (206C3); that is, if it has anything to do with *becoming an object of love to one's beloved as such a becoming will have to be in the real world*, and not as it might be in some dream-world of Hippothales'. Cf. n. 16 above, from which it will be readily seen why we hold that *whatever false beliefs Hippothales may (unbeknownst to himself) have about the matter, it is this becoming an object of love to one's beloved that Hippothales wants to talk about, and is referring to*.

demonstrate to you what one should say in conversation (*dialegesthai*)²⁷ with him instead of the things these people claim that you actually do say, and sing as well.'

'Not difficult at all,' he said. 'For if you go in with Ctesippus here and sit down and have a conversation (*dialegesthai*), my thinking is that he'll 206C10 actually come over (*prosienai*) to you himself, because you see, Socrates, he's got this outstanding love 206D1 of listening ["he's outstandingly *philekōös*"]. And another thing is that it's the Hermaea festival, so that the younger people and the boys are all mixed up together. So he'll come over to you, and if he doesn't, he knows Ctesippus well enough through Ctesippus' cousin Menexenus, because in fact it's Menexenus he goes around with [is *hetairos* of] more 206D5 than anybody else – so let's have Ctesippus call him over in case he doesn't come over himself after all.'

'That's what we should do,' I said. And as I said it, I took 206E1 Ctesippus and made my approach,²⁸ into the wrestling-school; the others came behind us.

When we got in, what we found there was that the boys had made their sacrifice and the business surrounding the sacred rituals was pretty well already done with, 206E5 so that everyone was playing knucklebones, all dressed up as they were. Well, most of them were playing outside in the courtyard, but a few were playing odds and evens in a corner of the stripping-off room with a large quantity of knucklebones that they were selecting (*proairoumenoi*) out of some little baskets; others were standing around and forming an audience.²⁹ Now one of these was actually Lysis, who was standing there among 207A1 the boys and the younger people with a garland on his head and standing out by his looks (*tēn opsin*) – worth talking about not just for his beauty but for his beauty-and-goodness.³⁰

²⁷ What *dialegesthai* is for Hippothales is no more than 'conversation' (so just now in c2). But for Socrates it is something more substantial: (philosophical) *discussion*, of the sort represented by the following exchange between him and Lysis and Menexenus. We have chosen to translate the verb standardly as 'converse', but the reader will need to bear this difference in mind. (When Socrates 'converses', it's not a normal sort of 'conversation'. See further Chapter 4, n. 20, below, with text to n.)

²⁸ The verb used (*prosienai*) is the same as the one Hippothales used (three times) for Lysis' 'coming over to' Socrates; but is there also the slightest suggestion, with the mention of the wrestling-school, of (verbal) wrestling to come?

²⁹ Whatever the rules of 'odds and evens' might have been, the picture is of the company playing a game of chance, with a few protagonists attempting to apply some skills (especially of selection, or choice: *proaireisthai* is a central term in the context of practical decision-making). The situation thus resembles the one that is about to take shape, with Socrates, Lysis and Menexenus in conversation on practical matters, watched by others.

³⁰ We meet here the combination of adjectives (*kalos te kai agathos*) referred to in n. 21 above. In ordinary contemporary usage at Athens the expression will have tended to be associated with the rich, powerful and leisured; 'gentleman(ly)' would have been the nearest equivalent in, say, Victorian Britain, i.e., when everyone knew who the 'gentlemen' were. But to translate 'gentlemanly' here (Lombardo goes for 'well-bred young gentleman') is to hide from view the presence of the notions of beauty and goodness, which separately as well as in combination will be central – and contested – in the following conversation between Socrates, Lysis and Menexenus (hence the manufactured rendering adopted, i.e. 'beauty-and-goodness': a Nietzschean sounding 'nobility-and-goodness' would get the tone about right, but would be liable to the same objection as 'gentlemanly').

For our part, we went off and sat down opposite the group – it was quiet there – and conversed (*dialegesthai*) 207A5 a bit among ourselves. Well, Lysis kept turning round to look at us, and it was clear that he wanted to come over to us (*prosienai*).³¹ So then for a time he was at a loss (*aporein*) about what to do, hesitating to come over to us on his own, but at that point Menexenus 207B1 came in from the courtyard in the middle of his game, and when he saw me and Ctesippus, came to sit beside us;³² and so when Lysis saw him he followed and sat down beside us together with Menexenus. Then others came over too, and Hippothales took his opportunity, 207B5 since he could see several people placing themselves close to, to use them as a cover and take a close position himself in such a way that he thought Lysis wouldn't catch sight of him, because he was afraid of annoying him; and positioned like this he set to listening.³³

As for me, I looked at Menexenus, and said ‘Son of Demophon . . .’

The scene, then, is set for Socrates' demonstration to Hippothales of ‘the things a lover should say about a beloved to him or to others’ (Socrates' words at 205AI–2), or ‘the line a person should take in conversation; or what he should do, to become an object of love for his beloved’ (what Hippothales asks for from Socrates at 206C2–3); or ‘what one should say in conversation (*dialegesthai*) with [Lysis] instead of the things these people claim that you [Hippothales] actually do say, and sing as well’ (206C2–3).

³¹ ‘Come over to us’: cf. n. 28 above.

³² So, by implication, giving up his game for something that will turn out to be rather more serious.

³³ As he made others listen to him (205D4; the verb used is the same); Socrates is about to show him what he *should* be saying instead of that other stuff – which is simultaneously about becoming whatever is involved in becoming a genuine lover (n. 26 above) *and*, clashing with this, and foolishly so, in praise of the *lover* (n. 16 above). The thought of Hippothales, as promised in n. 16, will fall to pieces under detailed examination.

CHAPTER 2

207B8–210D8 (Socrates and Lysis): do Lysis' parents really love him?

I 207B8–D4: A FEW PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

So, at 207B8, Socrates is addressing Menexenus, but his question is really directed at both boys, who are soon answering together:

‘Son of Demophon,’ **207C1** I said, ‘which of the two of you is the older?’

‘We have different views (*amphibētein*) about that,’ he said.

‘Then you’ll also dispute (*erizein*) about which of you is the better born,’ I said.

‘Yes, absolutely,’ he said.

207C5 ‘And about which of you is the more *beautiful*, too, in the same way.’

They both laughed at that.

‘I shan’t ask you, though,’ I said, ‘which of you is the richer; after all, the two of you are friends (*philō*), aren’t you?’

‘Yes, absolutely,’ they said together.

207C10 ‘Well, what friends have is said to be in common between them, so that on *this* subject you won’t quarrel at all – at least if you’re telling the truth about your friendship.’

They agreed.

207D1 I was setting about asking them, after that, which of the two of them was juster and wiser. Then, as I was in the middle of doing this, someone came up and got Menexenus to go off with him, because – he said – the trainer was calling for him; I got the impression he was in the middle of sacrificing.

So Menexenus went off . . .

This little scene performs several functions:

- (a) Socrates’ first question to Menexenus, about his and Lysis’ respective ages, looks innocent enough: what could be more natural for an older person initiating a conversation with his juniors than to ask them how old they are? But now Menexenus’ response to that first question immediately suggests that the two boys will argue, and compete, with each other about anything at all.¹ So what else do they argue about?

¹ Bordt 1998 (ad loc.) claims that the boys cannot have been disputing about their age, because they would have *known* how old they were; he proposes that the real meaning of the question is ‘which of

About which of them is better born (c3–4); about which is prettier, more beautiful (c5–6); not, Socrates proposes, about which of them is richer, if they are friends, as they claim they are, because friends proverbially hold things in common (c7–9). Do they argue, then, about which of them is juster and wiser? Well, Socrates never got to put *that* question. In fact, we shall get a fairly clear answer in the next and main bit of discussion, between Socrates and Lysis, as to how much wisdom Lysis actually has – and the same discussion suggests, retrospectively, what the point of that missed question would have been: are you concerned about whether you have the justice and wisdom needed to *use* those things you dispute about? In other words, the question to Menexenus and Lysis – the one Socrates does not get to put – becomes ‘do you dispute about the things that really matter?’² For Lysis will agree with Socrates that age by itself makes no difference, nor does the possession of a ‘noble body’ (209A1–2) or of ordinary material advantages: the prior question is whether one has the knowledge required to get benefit from such things (see especially 210A9–C4).

- (b) At the same time, the exchange between Socrates and Menexenus gently introduces the topic of ‘friendship’ and its conditions,³ in the form of

you is higher up in the pecking order (*würdiger*)?. This, however, hardly seems the natural reading of the word *presbuteros* – and why shouldn’t two young boys be imagined as disputing about something they knew perfectly well was indisputable, if it mattered to them enough? *That*, we ourselves suppose, is the point of the answer Plato has Menexenus give (*amphibētoumen*); and as a result of his being called away (207D2–4), Menexenus then misses out altogether on what will turn out, in the next section/episode (between Socrates and Lysis), to be the most important question: whether they have *wisdom* – a question that Socrates says (207D1–2) he would have asked, had he not been interrupted (‘Which of you is the juster and wiser?’). See below.

² The words ‘juster and wiser’ in that unasked question at D1–2 may suggest immediately to the modern reader that two different attributes are being mentioned here. If that suggestion is correct, then Socrates says very little in this dialogue about the first of the two different attributes. On the other hand, it is a commonplace in a range of Platonic dialogues that ‘virtue’, or ‘(human) excellence’ (*areté*), is knowledge; and that justice is the very same thing as virtue/knowledge, so that on this reading the ‘and’ might actually be epexegetic (so: ‘juster; *that is*, wiser’). The point is not of course that this is the way this claim would have been understood by Lysis or any other bystanders (unless they were Socratics); but it does not seem to us to be by any means ruled out that, for Socrates, the ‘and’ is to be taken that way, even if he knew full well that his interlocutors would understand the ‘and’ differently. We shall have considerably more to say about this phenomenon – that two disagreeing parties may actually have different conceptions of what it is that they are talking about without this impugning the idea that they are disagreeing; what we have called ‘the principle of real reference’ (see Chapter I, n. 16 above) will be heavily implicated. For the moment an agnostic stand about how to take the ‘and’ would be entirely appropriate in a cautious reader – but see also n. 12 below, where we note the occurrence within the *Lysis* itself of the frequent close association (identity?) between doing injustice to someone and harming someone (the presupposed Socratic thought will then be: ‘It is wise, and [given that wisdom is about maximizing one’s own good] will promote one’s maximum possible happiness, to minimize harm to others’).

³ But see also 206A1, where the apostrophe ‘my friend’ was bracketed by a reference to expertise in, knowledge about, ‘erotics’; there will turn out to be a close relation, so far as the *Lysis* is concerned, between knowing about *philia* and knowing about *erōs*.

what might have been spelled out as a refutation: one imagines they *do* dispute about which of them is the richer (there is every indication that they come from the same sort of rich background), but if they are really friends (as they insist they are), and friends hold what they have in common, they will not dispute about it. So *are* they really friends, *philoī* (n.b. c11 ‘if you’re really telling the truth about your friendship’)? What is the mark of a case of true *philein*?⁴

- (c) One should probably also note Socrates’ introduction of the term *erizein* in c3. Later on, at 211B8, Socrates will ask Lysis if he doesn’t know Menexenus is *eristikos*, a term typically used to refer to someone with a penchant for and/or expertise in disputing; some professional sophists,⁵ like the brothers Euthydemus and Dionysodorus in Plato’s *Euthydemus*, developed it into a fine art (‘eristics’). Here there are two possibilities. One is that at 211B the term is only lightly applied to Menexenus: ‘Don’t you know he’s *eristikos*? (Sc. and remember that you admitted at 207C that you both *erizein*.)’ The other possibility is that the term is applied in 211B by virtue of some special knowledge Socrates has of Menexenus independently of the scenario depicted in the *Lysis*. On this reading, Socrates is identifying Menexenus as a potential Euthydemus or Dionysodorus. In favour of the latter interpretation is a reference at 211C4–5 to Menexenus’ having learned his cleverness (sc. in disputing) from his cousin Ctesippus, for it happens that we see Ctesippus himself learning the tricks of the ‘eristic’ trade from Euthydemus and Dionysodorus in the *Euthydemus* (thus Socrates remarks at *Euthydemus* 303E–304A on ‘how quickly [Ctesippus] was able to imitate [the two sophists] on the spur of the moment’). Against this, however, is that there is no clear evidence of Menexenus’ behaving like an ‘eristic’ in the *Lysis* – if, that is, ‘eristical’ types characteristically indulge in verbal acrobatics, and care primarily for winning the argument rather than for truth.⁶ Or rather, there is no evidence of his

⁴ ‘If you’re friends to each other’, Socrates will say again at 221E5–6, towards the very end of the main discussion, and the question will then be whether their claim that they are will still stand in light of what that discussion has thrown up about friendship.

⁵ For the term ‘sophist’, see Chapter 1, n. 2.

⁶ For both characteristics, see Plato’s *Euthydemus*, *passim*; cf. also Aristotle’s remark at *Sophistical Refutations* 171b35, that eristics stand to (Aristotelian) dialecticians as pseudo-geometers to real ones. Why then the reference to Menexenus’ being Ctesippus’ pupil? It is unlikely to be a – back-handed – compliment to Ctesippus, since at that moment (see 211C10) Socrates and Lysis are talking privately. Perhaps it is just to lessen the apparent absurdity of Socrates’ suggestion that he might be worsted by the young Menexenus; or it is that, plus an opportunity to raise again issues about knowledge and expertise, and how they are acquired. See further below in this section. (An actual cross-reference to the *Euthydemus* remains an attractive possibility. But it might also be that the *Euthydemus* is picking

behaving like that after 207B–C; which may be exactly Plato's point. What we witness is the progressive engagement of two boys, both used to behaving childishly, in real philosophical argument (conversation, discussion). So the distinction between 'eristics' and philosophy really is present, the former being attributed by implication to children who don't yet know any better. True, only Lysis, and not Menexenus, will be praised explicitly for his 'love of wisdom', or *philosophia* (this at 213D6–7: Socrates is speaking at this point to the imaginary audience to which he addresses the whole dialogue), and that he generally seems to be ahead of Menexenus in grasping the argument (so at 213D; after that most noticeably at 222A); but there is nothing to encourage us in supposing that the boys are in any way different in kind. Indeed, as we shall see from the end of the dialogue, there is every reason for Plato's wanting us to go on thinking of them as alike.

- (d) In any case, 207B8–D4 also has the dramatic function of introducing us to Socrates' two main interlocutors. We learn quite a lot about them both: not just that they like to argue with each other, but also that they are both aware of and proud of their advantages. Their laughter at c6, in reaction to Socrates' asking whether they dispute about their respective beauty, also perhaps attests to a high degree of self-assurance; on this score at least, might Socrates have been right to get Hippothales worried about making his beloved prouder and more arrogant (206A)?
- (e) Menexenus is then conveniently called away (conveniently, that is, from the point of view of the plot), so that Socrates is able to shift his attention, as he wants, to Lysis; his indirect approach has paid off, and Lysis cannot suspect for a moment what Socrates and Hippothales have planned for him.

up on the *Lysis*; we do not know for certain which was written first. As will be clear, especially from our treatment of self-sufficiency in Chapters 4 and 10 below, as also from our treatment of the genuine and not pretended lover at 222A6–7, we see much in common between the approaches of the *Lysis* and the *Euthydemus*. In any case we should probably not make too much of Ctesippus' supposed eristical skills, since he turns up among those present at Socrates' death in prison, so from that point of view looking like just another Socratic: *Phaedo* 59b.) It is true that for a very long time, we – Penner and Rowe – saw nothing in Socrates' own ensuing questioning of Lysis in 207–10 other than something like eristic. *Faute de mieux*, one might have taken the accusation that Menexenus is an eristic as a precautionary excuse for Socrates' waxing eristical with Menexenus (as the two of us initially feared he might be doing) in 211–13. We are pleased to have had this excuse taken off the table by virtue of finding a reading of Socrates' questioning there, as in 207–10, that gives it serious philosophical purpose. See Chapter 3 below.

2 207D5–209C6

So the demonstration – of how a lover should speak to his darling – begins:

So Menexenus went off, 207D5 while I put a question to Lysis: ‘I suppose, Lysis,’ I said, ‘that your father, and your mother,⁷ love (*philein*) you very much?’

‘Yes, certainly.’

‘Well then, they would want you to be as happy as possible?’

207E1 ‘Obviously.’

‘And does it seem to you that a person is happy if he’s a slave, and in the sort of position that prevented him from doing any one of the things he desired (*epithumein*)?’

‘Zeus, no, it doesn’t seem so to me,’ he said.

‘Well then, if your father, and your mother, love you, and desire (*epithumein*) you to become happy, clearly 207E5 they are enthusiastic (*prothumeisthai*) in every way that you should *be* happy.’

‘Obviously,’ he said.

‘In that case do they allow you to do what you wish (*boulesthai*), and do they not tell you off at all, or prevent you from doing the things you desire (*epithumein*), whatever they may be?’

‘Zeus! Yes, they certainly do, Socrates; they stop me doing a whole lot of things!’

‘What do you mean?’ I said. ‘They wish (*boulesthai*) you to be 208A1 blessed,⁸ and they prevent you from doing what you wish (*boulesthai*), whatever that may be? I mean, tell me this:⁹ if ever you conceive a desire [*epithumein*, aorist] to ride on one of your father’s chariots, taking the reins when there’s a race on, they wouldn’t let you do it, but would prevent you?’

‘Zeus! They certainly wouldn’t let me,’ he said.

208A5 ‘Who *would* they let do it, then?’

‘There’s a driver who gets a wage from my father.’

‘What do you mean? They hand it over to a wage-earner more than to you to do whatever he wishes (*boulesthai*) about the horses, and on top of *that* 208B1 they actually pay him money?’

‘Well of course,’ he said.

‘But I imagine they hand it over to you to control [*archein*, the standard word for “rule”] the mule-pair, and if you wanted to take the whip and hit them, they’d let you.’

‘Why ever would they let me?’ he said.

‘What then,’ I said, ‘is no one permitted 208B5 to hit them?’

‘Very much so,’ he said; ‘the muleteer.’

‘And he’s a slave, or a free person?’

⁷ The Greek here uses a singular verb with a plural subject (so too at E3–4, though there the singular verb is followed by a plural one); the commas in the translation, around ‘and your mother’, acknowledge this fact.

⁸ I.e. *makarios*, used in this context interchangeably with *eudaimōn*, ‘happy’.

⁹ More literally, ‘Say it to me like this.’

'A slave,' he said.

'Even a slave, it seems, they think more of than you, their son, and they hand their personal possessions over to him more than to you, and they allow him to do what he wishes (*boulesthai*), whereas you **208C1** they prevent? And tell me this further thing. Do they allow you, yourself, to control (*archein*) yourself, or don't they even hand this over to you?'

'What an idea!' he said.

'Is there someone who controls you?'

'This person here, a guardian (*paidagōgos*),' he said.

'Surely not a slave?'

'What else would he be? But he does belong to *us*,' he said.¹⁰

208C5 'What a terrible thing,' I said ' – a free person being controlled by a slave! But what does this guardian do when he's controlling you?'

'He takes me to the teacher's,' he said; 'what else?'

'Surely *they* don't control you as well, your **208D1** teachers?'

'Of course they do!'

'There's a whole collection of masters¹¹ and controllers, then, that your father deliberately (*hekōn*) sets over you. But what about when you go home to your mother: in order to make you happy (*makarios*), does *she* let you do whatever you wish (*boulesthai*), whether with the wool or **208D5** the loom, when she's weaving? I don't for a moment suppose she prevents you from touching the blade or the shuttle or any of the other wool-working tools.'

He laughed, and said 'Zeus! **208E1** Socrates, it isn't just that she prevents me, I'd get hit if I touched them.'

'Heracles!' I said. 'Surely you haven't done some injustice¹² to your father or your mother?'

'Zeus! I haven't, for sure,' he said.

208E5 'Well, what *is* it in return for which they so terribly prevent you from being happy and doing whatever you wish (*boulesthai*), bringing you up from beginning to end of each day in a state of slavery to someone, and in a word doing practically none of the things you desire (*epithumein*)? The result, it appears, is that *you* don't get any benefit from the money, when there's so much of it – everyone **209A1** has more control over it than you do; neither do you get any benefit out of that body of yours, for all its nobility, but this too someone else looks after as if

¹⁰ 'But he's ours': as we remark below, the idea is 'But don't forget he's *our* slave.' Socrates' response ignores this attempt on Lysis' part somehow to get back in the driver's seat.

¹¹ The word is *despotēs*, primarily used of *slave-masters*.

¹² 'Done something unjust': the verb is *adikein*. However it will, we claim, become important later on – specifically, in the context of *Lysis* 214B7–D3; see Chapter 4 below – to know that the verb *adikein* and its cognates are in fact sometimes in Plato used almost interchangeably with expressions for harming. So most notably in the *Crito*: see 49B–C, D7, 49E–50A, and notice also the identity affirmed at *Crito* 48B between [living] *well* and [living] *justly*. This is not to deny that the associations of *adikein* would be different from those of harming for most of Socrates' interlocutors, as e.g. at *Crito* 47E. But for the Socrates of the *Crito*, and perhaps for the Socrates of the *Lysis*, doing injustice and harming are the same thing (and *of course* one should do no harm to one's parents).

it were some sheep.¹³ You control nothing, Lysis, and you don't do a single one of the things you desire.'

'That's because I'm not yet grown up, Socrates,' he said.

'I suspect it isn't 209A5 that that's stopping you, son of Democrates, since so far as that goes, I imagine, both your father and your mother actually do hand things over to you and don't wait till you're grown up. When they wish (*boulesthai*) things to be read to them or written down for them, I imagine you're 208B1 the first person in the household they assign to the task. Isn't that so?'

'Yes, it certainly is,' he said.

'Well then, here you are permitted to write whichever letter of the alphabet you wish (*boulesthai*) to write first, and whichever second; and you have the same licence when it comes to reading. And when you take up 209B5 the lyre, I imagine, neither your father nor your mother prevents you from tightening or loosening whichever string you wish (*boulesthai*), or from plucking with your fingers or striking with the plectrum. Or do they?'

'Certainly not.'

'What on earth, then, Lysis, would the reason be that in these cases 209C1 they don't prevent you, whereas in the cases we were talking about just now, they do stop you?'

'I imagine,' he said, 'that it's because these are things I know, whereas the others I don't.'

'Very good,' I said; 'well done!¹⁴ In that case your father isn't waiting till you're grown up to hand everything over to you, but on that very day that he considers you 209C5 to be thinking better¹⁵ than himself, he'll hand over both himself and his possessions to you.'

'That's what I think,' he said.

So: if Lysis' parents do love him, as he claims they do, and want him to be happy, then they'll do everything to make sure that he *is* happy. But in fact even though they want him to be happy, they prevent him from doing many of the things he wants to do, whereas they allow hired people or slaves to do them – so apparently thinking more of them (*hēgeisthai peri pleionos*, 208B7) than they do of him. They even appoint someone – his

¹³ The Greek has two verbs: 'tends [*poimainei*, used of looking after flocks] and looks after'; the translation assumes a hendiadys.

¹⁴ 'Very good' stands for the Greek *eien*, marking a crucial moment in the argument; 'well done' is a substitute for the Greek apostrophe *ō ariste*, you excellent person', which is too far away from English to work – and after all, at least part of the reason why Socrates calls Lysis that is because of what he's now done (said).

¹⁵ 'Thinking' here is *phronein*, a verb cognate with the adjective *phronimos* and the (verbal) noun *phronēsis*. In 210A–C, i.e. less than a page away, the adjective will be used for 'expert' or 'knowledgeable', and 'becoming *phronimos*' treated as equivalent to 'acquiring intelligence (*nous*)'; 'being *sophos* ('wise')' then substitutes for 'being *phronimos*' in 210D1 (the noun *phronēsis* becomes the standard, semi-technical term for '(practical) wisdom' in Aristotle). Thus 'thinking well' is in fact the same as being *sophos*, 'wise', as in the question that Socrates never got to put to Lysis and Menexenus at 207D. (By contrast, to be full of *phronēma*, 206A4, is to be arrogant.)

paidagōgos or ‘guardian’ – to control, or ‘rule over’ (*archein*) him, instead of allowing him to control himself: another slave, even if, as Lysis insists, ‘he does belong to *us*’ (as if that gave him at least a share, indirectly, of power over himself: 208c4).¹⁶ This person then takes him to someone else who ‘rules over’ him, his teacher – and when he goes home, his mother won’t allow him to engage himself happily with her wool or her loom, but would slap him if he touched them. ‘Heracles!’ Socrates says. ‘Surely you haven’t done some injustice to your father or your mother?’ ‘Zeus! I haven’t, for sure,’ answers Lysis. ‘Well, what *is* it in return for which they so terribly prevent you from being happy and doing whatever you wish . . . ?’ Lysis gets no benefit from all that wealth, or from a body that displays such nobility. (We should notice, and store up for future reference, the fact that the verbs *boulesthai* and *epithumein* – their occurrences are marked in the translation above – are used interchangeably. Later on Aristotle, and to a lesser extent Plato, will tend to identify the first verb and its cognates with *rational wishing*, the second with *irrational desiring*. There is no sign of any such specialization on the part of the two verbs here, nor will there be in the *Lysis* as a whole; indeed the theory Socrates will introduce and develop will actually rule out the very possibility of such a distinction. But all of that is still to come.)

‘It’s because I’m not yet old enough,’ says Lysis. ‘That can’t be the right reason,’ replies Socrates, ‘because there are some things in which they *do* allow you to do what you want. So what’s the difference between these cases and the other ones?’ ‘I imagine,’ he said, ‘that it’s because these are things I know, whereas the others I don’t’ (209c2). So his age isn’t the point – and it is (doubtly?) silly of Menexenus and Lysis to argue about their respective ages. The real reason why Lysis isn’t allowed to ‘get any benefit’ from his (the family’s) money or his ‘noble’ (*gennaios*) body – or so it seems, thus far – is because he doesn’t know what to do with them in the way that he knows what to do with the letters of the alphabet and the strings of a lyre. So, no point, yet, in the two friends’ disputing about nobility or beauty either; that is, until they know what to do with such things.¹⁷ (Socrates perhaps runs beauty and nobility together here at 209a1–2¹⁸ in order to avoid telling Lysis he is beautiful; after all, this is supposed to be a demonstration of how not to puff up one’s beloved.) The implication is that there is a proper use to which the family (‘our’) money, and his body,

¹⁶ What truly *belongs* to us will shortly surface as a major issue: see 210a–c.

¹⁷ I.e., presumably, because until then they won’t know *how* to get any benefit out of them. (But this is to go much faster than Socrates is so far taking Lysis.)

¹⁸ I.e., instead of keeping them separate as he did in his questions at 207c.

are to be put,¹⁹ and that he will not be allowed to ‘get any benefit’ out of either until he knows what that use is; but then ‘doing what he wants’ with them will be allowed just when he does know, and accordingly when he *will* get benefit from them. Just so, putting ‘whatever letter he wishes’ first or second when reading or writing will not be a matter of his taking letters in any order whatever, according to his whim at the time; what he wants is fixed by what he knows is the appropriate order to get the right sequence of sounds or written letters.

So then Lysis’ father isn’t waiting for him simply to get older before he hands everything over to him; what matters is rather whether, and when, Lysis starts to ‘think better’ than his father – and on the day that he does, his father will hand over control both of his property and of himself (209c3–6), just as both Lysis himself and what is ‘his’ are currently controlled by others. Thus we reach the last item in Socrates’ list in 207c–d: wisdom,²⁰ which will be the condition of Lysis’ (or Menexenus’) touching anything, whether horses, shuttles or money. The idea of a father handing over to his (eldest) son is no doubt perfectly in accordance with ordinary fifth/fourth-century Greek assumptions and attitudes;²¹ and the same goes for most of the argument so far (i.e. from 207d5). Few would have been likely to demur, as indeed few would demur now, from the proposal that parents only allow their children to do what they want when the children are in a position to do it knowledgeably, with understanding – even if most would probably have said (and most would say now), like Lysis, that this is a matter of age.

There is, however, one extraordinary feature of the argument still hanging over us. This is Socrates’ suggestion – one that he has been making since the beginning of this particular conversation with Lysis, and will actually claim to have confirmed by the end of it – that insofar as Lysis’ parents don’t allow him to do what he wants, *they don’t love him*. How can Socrates be suggesting such a thing? Isn’t that just what any ordinary *child* might say? And isn’t that childish claim what not just parents but anyone – any

¹⁹ Quite what proper ‘use’ Lysis might think his body might be put to isn’t clear, but perhaps doesn’t matter in any case, since he admits he’s lacking the relevant knowledge. (With Hippothales around, one can easily imagine to what *improper* use Lysis’ body might be put, from his parents’ and family’s point of view.) Lombardo, in the Hackett translation, renders *sōma* here as ‘person’ rather than ‘body’, which avoids these sorts of issues. He may be right to do so, but on the whole it seems more attractive to stick to ‘body’, not least because of the comparison of Lysis’ treatment at the hands of his ‘guardian’ to the herding of sheep.

²⁰ That is, on the assumption that ‘thinking better’ = ‘being wiser’ (see n. 15 above).

²¹ The most famous example of father handing over to son is in the *Odyssey*, where Laertes has ceded the ‘kingship’ to Odysseus even before the latter departs for Troy; for examples closer to Plato’s time see Strauss 1993: 68–72.

adult Athenian of the fifth or fourth century BCE, or just any adult²² – would immediately object to, on the grounds that such behaviour on the part of parents precisely shows *how much* they love their children? After all, as Socrates gets Lysis to recognize, his parents only stop him from doing what he wants in cases where he lacks the requisite knowledge. Yet Socrates persists with the line that Lysis' parents don't love him, to the extent that he lacks knowledge (and clearly he does lack it, since he's still going to the teacher's: 210D). Why?

We have to balance our sense that (1) of course Lysis' parents do love him, and that this is shown by their not letting him do whatever he wants in situations where he doesn't have knowledge, against the wrenching paradox that Socrates insists on, that (2) Lysis' parents' love for him is conditional on his having knowledge and being useful. Many interpreters have indeed suggested, on the basis of the immediately following passage, that for Socrates here (2) represents no paradox, and that he is actually asserting, in his own person, that neither Lysis' parents nor anyone else will ever love him except to the extent that he has knowledge.²³ We ourselves believe a paradox is intended, and that this paradox flows from two key premisses from the very beginning of the argument with Lysis (207D–E): the premiss that his parents love him very much and so want him to be as happy as possible, and the premiss that a person is not happy if he or she is not free to do whatever he or she wants. These two premisses get us what we have just characterized as the 'childish' conception of love, that to love someone is to let him or her do whatever he or she wants. The entire argument, we shall maintain, is conducted on the basis of this conception of love, and on the basis of the hardly less childish conception of happiness that goes with it. But, extraordinarily, Socrates never calls attention to that fact.

3 209C7–210D8

To return now to the way the argument develops, what we have up to this point is that insofar as Lysis' parents don't allow him to do what he wants, they don't love him, though when he has knowledge, they do allow him to do what he wants and so do love him. What transpires in the next part of the argument, where this paradox is sharpened, is that Socrates turns it

²² I.e. anyone capable of 'adult' thinking (in case we should be thought to be accepting that wisdom is an automatic accompaniment of age).

²³ But see Ctesippus' scathing comments on Hippothales' childish (boy-like) compositions at 205B–C. If we think Socrates himself endorses the conclusion that Lysis' parents don't love him, how can it not be embarrassing to have *Socrates*, of all people, arguing like a child?

into a general rule that people cede control over things to those they think possess the knowledge necessary to control the things in question; he then proceeds to treat loving (*philein*) as conditional on the possession by the loved one of such useful knowledge (209c2–6 begins the first step). Part of the final outcome will then apparently be that Lysis' parents, or indeed anyone, will only love him to the extent that he has useful knowledge, and since he has admitted that he has very little, he will not be much loved even by those close to him – and also has rather little to pride himself on. That, Socrates almost blurts out to Hippothales, is how one should talk to one's beloved, i.e. by humbling them (210E1–5).

The passage runs like this:

'Very good,' I said. 'What about the neighbour? Won't he use the same rule for judging you as your father will? 209D1 Do you think he'll hand over the running of his estate²⁴ to you, at such time as he considers you to be thinking better about estate-management than himself, or will he – do you think – preside over it himself?'

'I think he'll hand it over to me.'

'What about the Athenians? Do you think they won't hand over their affairs²⁵ to you, at such time as 209D5 they see that you're thinking (*phronein*) sufficiently well?²⁶

'I think they will.'

'Zeus!' I said: 'in that case, what about the Great King?²⁷ Would he hand things over more to his eldest son, destined to control all Asia, to throw in²⁸ whatever he wished (*boulesthai*) to throw into the sauce 209E1 when the meat was boiling, or to us, if we arrived at his court and showed him that *we* were thinking finer thoughts²⁹ about the preparation of cooked food than his own son?'

'To us, clearly,' he said.

'And *him* he wouldn't let throw in even the smallest amount, whereas 209E5 us, even if we wished (*boulesthai*) to take whole handfuls of salt, he'd let us throw them in.'

'Obviously.'

'What then if his son had something wrong with his eyes: would he let him touch his own 210A1 eyes, if he didn't consider him an expert in medicine,³⁰ or would he stop him?'

'He'd stop him.'

²⁴ Or 'household' (*oikia*).

²⁵ There is no word for 'affairs' in the Greek; the phrase (*ta hautōn*) is identical to the one translated '(their) personal possessions' (*ta hautou*) at 208C7–8.

²⁶ A rather more plausible sounding proposal in an Athenian context, where even the democracy tended to be governed by the élite.

²⁷ I.e. the Great King of Persia, (by ordinary standards) the most powerful individual in the world.

²⁸ We agree with Bordt 1998 in finding no convincing reason for accepting Burnet's proposal to suppress *emballein* in the Greek text at 209D8.

²⁹ That is, thinking *kallion*; 'more finely', 'more beautifully', or just 'better'.

³⁰ Reading *iatron*, not *iatrikon*, treated by Tempesta 1997: 79, as a copyist's mistake, but preferred by some editors (not that it makes any difference to what Socrates is saying).

'But if he thought *we* were experts in medicine, if we wanted to open up the son's eyes and sprinkle them with a dose of ashes (*tephra*),³¹ even then I don't think he'd stop us, because he'd consider us to be thinking correctly.'

210A5 'What you say is true.'

'Then is it the case that he would also hand over everything else to us more than to himself and his son, that is, anything else about which we appear to him wiser (*sophōteroi*) than the two of them?'

'Necessarily so, Socrates,' he said.

'This is how it is, then,' I said, 'my friend Lysis: with respect to the things **210B1** about which we become good thinkers (*phronimoi*), everyone will hand them over to us, whether Greeks or non-Greeks, men or women, and we shall do in these cases whatever we wish (*boulesthai*), and no one will deliberately (*hekōn*)³² stand in our way, but we shall be at the same time free ourselves, in the cases in question, and **210B5** controllers of others, and these will be *our* things, because we shall benefit from them; with respect to the things about which we do not acquire intelligence (*nous*), on the other hand, neither will anyone hand it over to us to do in relation to *them* what appears to us to be the thing to do, but everyone **210C1** will stand in our way to whatever extent they can, not only people not belonging to us (*hoi allotrioi*), but our father and our mother, and anything³³ else that may belong more closely [be *oikeiotoron*] to us than these, and we ourselves in such cases shall be subject to others, and the things in question will not belong to us [will be *allotria*], because we shall derive no benefit from them. Do you agree **210C5** that this is how it is?'

'I agree.'

'Will we then be objects of love (*philoī*) to anyone, and will anyone love (*philein*) us, in those things, whatever they are, in which we are of no benefit (*anōpheleis*)?'³⁴

'Certainly not.'

'If *that's* so, then (*nun ara*)³⁵ neither does your father love you; nor does any other person love anyone else, to whatever extent that someone else is useless (*achrēstos*).'³⁶

'It doesn't appear so,' **210D1** he said.

³¹ Curiously, according to pseudo-Aristotle *Mirabilia* 834b30, 'Phrygian' *tephra* was actually used for the treatment of eye disease. Perhaps Plato's original readers/hearers will have been expected just to hear 'ash', and to assimilate this case to the one about putting handfuls of salt into the sauce (whoever would want *ashes* in their eyes?); but if Plato, and the original readers/hearers, also knew about the 'Phrygian treatment', that would give an extra dimension to the example. After all, maybe only an expert could absolutely rule out the possibility of a dish that would be improved by huge quantities of salt.

³² The same term (*hekōn*) as at 208D2. Other possible renderings of *hekōn* are 'intentionally', 'willingly' – as in the standard translation of the Socratic dictum *oudeis hekōn hamartanei*, 'no one goes wrong willingly' (cf. Chapter 1 above, n. 25). See further below.

³³ We should presumably take note of the fact that the Greek uses the neuter gender here – even while expecting persons to be at least included; Lysis, for instance, might take Socrates to be advertising to his close friend Menexenus. Compare too the parallel sentence at 210D4, '. . . neither anyone else nor your father will be friends to you, nor your mother nor *those belonging to you* (*hoi oikeioi*)'. But see further nn. 37 and 38 below.

³⁴ Or 'of no help'. It is tempting to add 'to anyone' in the translation, but the Greek has merely 'in those things, whatever they are, in which we are *anōpheleis*'. See below.

³⁵ The *nun* ('if *that's* so', i.e. in that case) perhaps marks the contrast with Lysis' original claim at 207C6 ('Of course my parents love me').

³⁶ The same word that Socrates used of himself (with a qualification), along with *paulos*, at 204C1.

'In that case, my boy, if you become wise, everyone will be friends (*philoī*) to you and everyone will belong to you [will be *oikeioī* to you],³⁷ for you will be useful and good, but if you don't, neither anyone else nor your father will be friend (*philos*) to you, nor your mother nor those belonging to you (*hoi oikeioī*).³⁸ Now is it possible in these circumstances, Lysis, 210D5 to think big thoughts³⁹ – in the case of things one isn't yet thinking in at all?'

'How could it be?' he said.

'But then, if *you're* in need of a teacher, *you* aren't yet thinking.'

'True.'

'Neither, then, is there anything big about your thoughts,⁴¹ if in fact you're still thoughtless.'

'Zeus!' he said; 'Socrates, it doesn't seem to me that there is.' (209C7–210D8)

So there – as Socrates would have said to Hippothales, if he hadn't checked himself at the last moment – is how one should talk to one's beloved (we add here the first part of what we have chosen to treat as the next section, because of what it will tell us about the status of the present one; though our discussion of that subject we defer until Chapter 3):

210E1 When I heard his answer, I glanced at Hippothales, and almost slipped up; what came into my head was to say 'That, Hippothales, is how one *should* converse (*dialegesthai*)⁴² with one's beloved, humbling him and cutting him down to size, not puffing him up, as you are doing, and praising him to pieces.'

210E5 Well, when I saw him struggling with himself and thrown into confusion by what was being said, I remembered that he had even placed himself so as to

³⁷ In normal Greek, one's *oikeioī* would be one's relatives, especially, or else one's relatives and close friends ('belonging to one's *oikia*, house'). This, and the fact that the Greek term *philoī* will include one's family-members as well as one's friends, seems to be what allows the move here in D1–2 from 'everyone will be your friends' to 'everyone will be *oikeioī* to you', the point being that, if Lysis becomes wise, everyone – neighbour, Athenians, Great King . . . – will treat Lysis in the same way as his father and mother (i.e. by allowing him to do what he wants).

³⁸ Given the first part of the sentence, the implication is 'neither anyone else nor your father will be friends to you <or *oikeioī* to you>, nor your mother nor your [other?] *oikeioī*'. So: your *oikeioī* will not be *oikeioī* to you if you do not become wise; that is, because they will not love you/be your friends/belong to you. Whatever else he is doing in this passage, i.e. as part of his strategy to deflate Lysis, Socrates is also making some play with the notion of *oikeiōtēs*, or more generally of belonging. Cf. also 210C2–3 (surely there is nothing *oikeiōtēr* to one than one's parents?), and indeed 210A9–C4 as a whole. One can presumably be forgiven for imagining that this might have something to do with the prominent role the *oikeion* – 'what belongs', understood as what is *good* – will take on in later stages of the argument of the *Lysis* (see 221D6 ff.).

³⁹ I.e., in this context, to have thoughts to be proud of; a kind of inversion of the normal sense in Greek of *mega phronein* – for which cf. 206A4 'full of *phronēma*', and n. 15 above.

⁴⁰ 'Be thinking (in)', *phronein*, is perhaps meant in the first instance to be equivalent to 'be *phronimos* (in/at)', as at B1, i.e. 'expert in', 'possessed of knowledge about'; but Socrates will take it at face value in D7, so as to describe Lysis as 'thoughtless' – presumably a further step down, in ordinary terms, from just not having good thoughts.

⁴¹ The Greek has 'neither . . . are you *megalophrōn*': the adjective normally signifies e.g. generosity, 'bigheartedness', but the sense of what Socrates is saying here must be much the same as in D5 (see n. 39 above: 'you've no thoughts to be proud of').

⁴² Or 'discuss': see Chapter 1 above, n. 27.

avoid Lysis' noticing him, so I managed to catch myself and **211A1** bite my tongue. In the meantime, Menexenus had come back and was sitting himself down in the place he'd got up from. At which point Lysis, in a very playful and friendly fashion, and without Menexenus noticing, said to me in a quiet voice 'Socrates, what you're saying **211A5** to me – say it to Menexenus as well!'

To which I said 'That *you'll* tell him, Lysis, because you were paying complete attention.'

'Yes, absolutely,' he said.

'Try, then,' I said, 'to recall it as far as **211B1** you can, so that you can report everything clearly to him; and if you forget anything, ask me again when you come across me next.'

'I'll do that, Socrates,' he said; 'very much so, you can be sure of it. But say something else to him, so that I too can hear it, **211B5** until it's time for us to leave for home.' (210E1–211B5)

The crucial question for the interpreter must be why Plato makes Socrates choose the particular *means* to humbling Lysis that he does, i.e. one that lands him, along the way, with a conclusion that seems at least partly gratuitous: love as conditional on usefulness, even where it is a case of parents' love for children, so that not even Lysis' parents really do love him. Why – the question is the one we asked earlier – does Socrates go this way about it, rather than by the more obvious route? It would have been just as humbling for Lysis – as well as simpler and more direct – if Socrates had stuck to the point, in fact implied by Lysis, that parental love actually consists in watching for the moment when their children are able to do things with knowledge. Worse still, one might say that this point is *so* patently obvious, and so obviously *true*, that Socrates' claim to be denying it actually detracts from the lesson in humiliation he's supposed to be giving.

So is Socrates, or is his author, Plato, merely being perverse? (A charge of sheer incompetence had better, presumably, be left as a last resort, though as a matter of fact modern commentators have been quite ready to charge the Plato of the *Lysis* with confusion.⁴³) That is, is Socrates just behaving in a bloody-minded way in order to confuse Lysis, and perhaps us, and have a bit of fun along the way? Let that account of the point of the passage be explanation B-M (for 'bloody-minded'). Or (CL – for 'clever') is Plato's aim to have Socrates taking what he sees as a clever, provocative route to the conclusion he needs for the purposes of his conversation with Hippothales, without caring about whether the premisses of the argument are true? In our own view, neither (B-M) nor (CL) looks palatable, especially in a work which will show plenty of signs of being meant as a protreptic to philosophy, and of proposing a fairly sharp demarcation between philosophical and other

⁴³ See n. 61 below, and also Chapter 10, §3, on Vlastos.

forms of discourse; a demarcation, moreover, that depends on treating philosophy herself as the love of wisdom, and so of truth itself.⁴⁴ But in any case, *contra* (b-M), setting out simply to confuse someone perhaps not yet into his teens looks like a less than lofty goal; *contra* (CL), it is hardly good practice for us to begin interpreting a philosophical work – ‘philosophical’, that is, by our own standards as well as those implied by the *Lysis* itself – by assuming that we already know what the truth is. It thus seems not only reasonable but imperative to consider whether there may not be some deeper philosophical point that Plato has in view: let this be explanation (PH).⁴⁵ ((b-M), (CL) and (PH) will be exemplars of types of reading; similar choices will crop up in other parts of the *Lysis*.)

What has typically prevented serious readers from seeing this part of the *Lysis* as doing real, substantive philosophical work is an application of the principle of charity: *because* parents obviously love their children even when they’re no use, Socrates can’t be allowed to mean it when he draws the opposite conclusion.⁴⁶ But in that case the only available explanations of what is going on will apparently be of type (b-M) or type (CL) (unless, again, we fall back on a charge of negligence), and although some scholars are happy to accept that Socrates can behave badly and unscrupulously,⁴⁷ that itself seems to run counter to the principle of charity which seemed to land us with (b-M) and (CL) in the first place. Or is the idea that Plato can keep his hands clean even while making Socrates play dirty?

⁴⁴ See above on ‘sophists’, ‘eristic’ and philosophy; later on in the dialogue poets, cosmologists and other potential sources of wisdom will be found wanting – and still Socrates and his interlocutors continue the search for an answer to their questions.

⁴⁵ For the moment we can treat what Socrates is ostensibly doing for Hippothales (see 210E) as a side issue. The main issue here between (b-M), (CL) and (PH) is whether Plato’s point is (b-M) no more than confusing Lysis and having fun on the way, or (CL) no more than doing something (having Socrates show someone how to humble a beloved) without caring whether any truth emerges from the argument used for the purpose – the emphasis being on the *not caring*. (As we shall eventually see, (CL) will be a peculiarly disastrous sort of interpretation to apply to the *Lysis*.) Or (PH) is the point to bring out something serious about what Lysis (and Hippothales) do or do not understand?

⁴⁶ Or, more precisely: readers begin by supposing that the *Lysis* is about ‘friendship’, understood in the broad sense of the Greek *philia* (see n. 37 above), but nonetheless restricted to or centred on inter-personal relationships; they then expect a decent philosopher and human being (as Plato is reasonably, or charitably, presumed to be) to get certain basic things about such relationships right. In our view, however, the initial assumption represents a gross underestimation of the ambitions of the *Lysis*, which offers nothing less than *a theory of human motivation in general*. (So yes, it is about ‘friendship’, and it begins and ends with interpersonal relationships: between lovers and their darlings, between parents and children; between friends as we understand these. But the dialogue proposes to explain such relationships in terms of a general theory of desire, i.e. one that covers human desire in all its shapes and sizes. At this stage of our analysis, however, none of this can of course be more than a promissory statement.)

⁴⁷ See most recently Beversluis 2000.

None of these general considerations, however, matches the importance of one very particular fact about the *Lysis* (as we see it): that it is, at almost every turn, a work that *challenges* ordinary assumptions – including our modern ones, in case these coincide, as they frequently appear to do, with those we seem justified in attributing to Plato's contemporaries. Nor is this challenge simply a kind of review, a test that, all being well, will justify us in going back to where we started (softer versions of interpretations of type (CL) – whether of this part of the *Lysis* or of some other bit of Plato's text – will often presuppose this kind of justification). It is rather an invitation to start thinking in new ways, and the invitation is still on the table as the *Lysis* ends. Now this is, of course, a large claim that it will take the whole of the rest of our present analysis of the dialogue to substantiate. But it should suffice for the moment to point out that the question 'who or what is loved?' is a major preoccupation of significant parts of the later argument of the dialogue: perhaps most notably 219B–220B, which introduces the mysterious 'first friend' (as it is standardly called), and ends by talking about 'friendships' for things that are 'loved' for the sake of other things as 'so-called friendships' (*hautai hai legomenai philiai*, 220B2–3). Now of course some might suppose – though as will become apparent later, Penner and Rowe do not – that Socrates will plump for treating parents' love for their children as real friendships (i.e. not for the sake of something else). The truth is, however, that we have not yet got far enough in the dialogue to be able to tell, and given what will happen later, we are surely prevented from simply assuming that Socrates will exhibit this particular example of (what we may be tempted to call) good sense. In short, the mere fact that he may say something that appears to us silly or perverse is not a conclusive reason for thinking that he is *being* either silly or perverse.

In asking the reader to choose between our options (B-M), (CL), and (PH), we are not claiming that either (CL) or (PH) would exclude Socrates' having fun at Lysis' expense; nor that either (B-M) or (PH) would exclude his being deliberately provocative. The issue is simply one of *what the main point of the present section of the dialogue is*. To sum up, the choice appears to be between treating this part of Socrates' argument as – among other things – a clever piece of preliminary, though perhaps in some sense philosophical, provocation (which will nevertheless in the end leave most of our assumptions intact), and treating it – also among other things – as already containing substantive philosophical matter (intended to present a real challenge to our assumptions). More concisely: just how seriously should we take the detail of Socrates' argument?

It is first of all 209C–210D that forces this choice on the reader. The first part goes: just as Lysis' father will hand over control of everything when he thinks Lysis is 'thinking better' than he is, so too – Socrates claims, and Lysis agrees – his father's neighbour will hand over *his* estate to him, when he considers Lysis a better estate-manager than himself; and the Athenians will hand over their affairs to him 'when they see that you're thinking sufficiently well' (209D4–5). Next, if it's a question of cooking meat, it's not his eldest son the Great King would choose to flavour the sauce but Socrates and Lysis, if they could show him that they had 'finer thoughts' about cooking (209E2);⁴⁸ even if the two of them wanted to throw in handfuls of salt, he would let them. Similarly if it was a matter of eye-disease, or anything else: were Socrates and Lysis to show themselves more expert than the king and his son in any area, it is to them that the king would give control.

This is surely at least a bit odd. If it is reasonable enough to say that a father will hand control over things to his son when he thinks him better equipped to manage than himself, it is, surely, plainly false that people generally will hand things over – that is, the things that, on any ordinary view, they most care about – to anyone they think more expert at dealing with them than themselves. For example, why won't a neighbour be wary of handing over to someone with whom he might well have had boundary-disputes, if not disputes of a worse sort? And won't the Great King hesitate over Socrates' and Lysis' *motives*, whatever their expertise? It is strange stuff, and perhaps all the stranger for being spun out for so long; rather than contributing to the preliminary conclusion at 210A8–B1 – 'This is how it is, then . . . my friend Lysis: with respect to the things about which we become good thinkers, everyone will hand them over to us . . .' – the successive examples appear at first sight to make it *less* plausible. There is also surely far more than would be needed, even given the particular route chosen, for taking Lysis down a peg: why should that require so extended, and varied, a list of examples? In other words, it already seems that there had better be something more, something philosophically meatier, behind it all.

At this point readings of both type (B–M) and type (CL) will cease to have much attraction: neither is capable of explaining the detail of the strategy Socrates adopts. So, unless Plato is just being inefficient even about causing confusion, and/or uneconomical in his provocation (which, once again,

⁴⁸ In line with his task of showing Hippothales how to talk to a beloved – which involves not allowing the boy to get above himself – Socrates switches from a picture of Lysis as statesman to Lysis as cook, albeit to the Great King (but to soften the blow, Socrates is there cooking with him). Is there also an implied question about why the Great King's son should inherit the throne just because he is the King's son, and the eldest?

charity will prevent us from supposing except as a last resort), only (PH) seems to be left of our three original alternatives. But it still has to be shown that a (PH)-type reading can be made to work. We still, for example, have no answer to the question raised before: why should we, or anyone, accept that everyone (neighbours, the Athenians, the Great King) would hand things over to Lysis, or to Lysis and Socrates, just on the basis of their being experts? It's easy enough to see why the boy Lysis is so willing to accept it: Socrates is appealing to, playing on, his vanity and ambitions, revealed in the previous short exchange with the two boys together (207B–C). His approach is subtly incremental: if Lysis' own father will hand over to him at some point, why mightn't his neighbour ask him in too, impressed by his grasp of economics? And why not the Athenian people as a whole? Even the Great King will hand things over – but as cook (the moment of deflation, before the doctor is introduced). Socrates frames the whole conversation in terms of power: can a person be happy if he's a slave, he started by asking – and why isn't it odd that Lysis should be 'ruled' by slaves, free person that he is? But there are circumstances when even the Athenians, even the Great King, will hand over to him (even if it's just the cooking) . . . If only he waits and learns, so the (half-)implication is, he will rule the world. What, though, about us, the readers? Why should *we* swallow it all, and what is in it for us?

A large part of the answer to this question is – we propose – contained in the fairly purple passage at 210A9–C5, which is introduced as a summing up, and leads directly to the conclusions of the present exchange ('Will we then be objects of love to anyone, and will anyone love us, in those things, whatever they are, in which we are of no benefit?', c5–6: answer, 'No' . . .). The passage, i.e. 210A9–C5, is worth repeating because of its importance:

‘This is how it is, then,’ I said, ‘my friend Lysis: with respect to the things about which we become good thinkers, everyone will hand them over to us, whether Greeks or non-Greeks, men or women, and we shall do in these cases whatever we wish, and no one will deliberately stand in our way, but we shall be at the same time free ourselves, in the cases in question, and controllers of others, and these will be *our* things, because we shall benefit from them; with respect to the things about which we don't acquire intelligence, on the other hand, neither will anyone hand it over to us to do in relation to *them* what appears to us to be the thing to do, but everyone will stand in our way to whatever extent they can, not only people not belonging to us, but our father and our mother, and anything else that may belong more closely to us than these, and we ourselves in such cases shall be subject to others, and the things in question will not belong to us, because we shall derive no benefit from them. Do you agree that this is how it is?’

‘I agree.’

This sentence as a whole is not easy to fathom. But one part of it seems designed to help with our current problem – that is, of understanding why Socrates might think anyone ought to agree that people generally will hand things over to the relevant experts: it's that 'no one will *deliberately* [or 'willingly', *hekōn*] stand in [the] way' of someone operating in an area in which he knows what he's doing. Why not? What if the expert had bad motives? The answer to this is that it is simply the wrong question. Socrates' concern here is with *expertise*, not with experts; or rather, with experts only insofar as they possess the relevant expertise, and disregarding any other characteristics they might have. (The motives of the person who happens to be the expert are taken as already accounted for in the context. We find the same phenomenon, of abstracting from some relevant expert to the expertise itself, in both the *Gorgias* – e.g. at 466E13–467A1 – and the first book of the *Republic*, especially, and all but explicitly, in the discussion of *the doctor insofar as he is a doctor* at 341B ff.) The idea will be this: what would make Lysis' neighbour, or the Athenians, or the Great King, or anyone, behave as they are alleged to behave, i.e. in handing over to the expert, not to the non-expert, is evidently getting the job done, whatever it is. But then why won't they *always* want that? Why would anyone, deliberately or willingly, have his household run less well when he could have it run better? (At any rate, why would he knowingly make that choice?) Why would anyone willingly refrain from handing over his son's eyes to someone who could cure them? Conversely, why would anyone – not just people unrelated to us ('people who don't belong to us', *hoi allotrioi*), but our parents, and 'if there is anything that belongs more closely to us than our parents, that too' – not stop us acting in areas in which we were not competent?

Here is another way to bring out that there are contexts – including the present one – where the motives of the person who is the expert are taken for granted. Take the slaves or wage-labourers whom Lysis' father puts in charge of him (208A–D): the chariot-driver, the muleteer, the 'pedagogue' (Lysis' 'guardian'), the teachers. It hardly ever so much as occurs to most readers of this passage to ask, in connection with the argument, 'Yes, but what about the motives of the chariot-driver, the muleteer . . . ? Mightn't they want to harm Lysis' father and family?' We suggest that it is entirely sensible not to ask anything of the sort; and equally sensible, in the context of Lysis' neighbour, the Athenians, and the Great King and their handing things over, not to raise the question of motives particular experts might have by virtue of particular features of their personal situation.

More important, however, is what 210A9–C5 contributes towards our understanding of the larger strategy of Socrates' argument. What is

absolutely central is the way 210A9–C5 ties what is ‘ours’ to doing what will benefit us, and also ties benefit to knowledge. To love a person, in the view Socrates elicits from Lysis, is a matter of wanting them to be happy, which in turn is – on this same view – letting them do what they want, or of ‘handing things over’ to them: in effect, he has now done a sort of survey of the kinds of cases in which people do hand things over to others, and found that it’s always the same – they only hand things over to those who have knowledge. Now, in 210A–C, instead of talking about the benefit/harm to the ones doing the handing over, Socrates refers to the benefit/harm *to the recipients*. That is, in the case of Lysis’ parents handing things over to Lysis, the concern is with benefit to Lysis, not to the parents: ‘[where we are “good thinkers”] no one will deliberately stand in our way . . . because *we* shall benefit from them; [but where we are not] . . . everyone will stand in our way . . . because *we* shall derive no benefit from [such things]’. Clearly, Socrates’ eye is still on Lysis’ particular case, not on those other cases (the neighbour, the Athenians . . .), whose only real purpose in the context is to confirm under what conditions ‘handing over’/‘allowing to do what one wants’ occurs. But Socrates’ next move, ‘Will we then be objects of love to anyone, and will anyone love us, in those things, whatever they are, in which we are of no benefit?’ (210C5–6), proceeds to use the premiss that allowing people to do what they want is the same as loving them, and apply it universally. If, then, we’re to be loved, understood as being allowed to do what we want, by anyone, we must acquire knowledge. So the same will hold for Lysis in relation to his parents: until he becomes wise, they won’t love him – at least on this understanding of love.

Now as a matter of fact there are some things in which Lysis *is* allowed to ‘do what he wants’ by his parents: reading and writing, playing the lyre. So all isn’t lost for him. But of course he is only in his present difficulties at all because Socrates has allowed him to go on holding those ‘childish’ conceptions of love and happiness, as we called them earlier: allowed him, that is (even encouraged him), to go on supposing that love is a matter of letting people do what they want, and happiness a matter of doing what one wants. That is what enables Socrates, finally, to reach his conclusion, once given the amendment that it’s doing what one wants when one has the relevant expertise or knowledge: people love you if they let you do what you want, because loving people is wanting them to be happy, and being happy is doing what you want; they only let you do what you want when you have the right knowledge; so they only love you if you have that knowledge. Lysis evidently isn’t able to see where he has gone wrong, at least in the course of the argument itself, nor are the false moves anywhere explicitly

identified (so that Lysis is, formally, refuted: by his lights, his parents don't love him).

But the splendid irony is that if he had seen where his difficulties are coming from, the practical outcome of the argument would have been the same: that he needs to acquire knowledge. Up to and including that moment in the argument when he understands why his parents prevent him from doing things, i.e. 209c2, everything is going swimmingly: Socrates has got him to see the importance of knowledge, and at that point not only, as we remarked before, could he have said simply 'so you've got a lot to learn', but he might have added 'and since they want you to be happy, evidently your being happy will be a matter doing things knowledgeably and not otherwise'. If he chooses not to go by that simple route, it is because the situation demands a refutation; and in order to accomplish that he sticks with those false ('childish') conceptions, even while significantly, if not fatally, undermining them. For he saves them only by dint of filling out '(doing) what one wants' as 'what one wants on the basis of expertise', i.e. of what expertise says will achieve the result appropriate to it; and the two things, at least on any ordinary assumptions, are hardly the same. (We may notice here, in passing, that the context provides a harbinger – or, alternatively, an echo – of Socrates' arresting argument in the *Gorgias* that orators *à la* Gorgias and tyrants *à la* Archelaus have no power. That argument is based on a distinction between doing what you *want* and doing what merely *seems best*: exactly the distinction that Lysis needs, here in the *Lysis*, if he is to keep the idea that happiness is doing what you want.)

To be fair to Lysis, Socrates hardly gives him much opportunity to object, and to nail that new premiss. Instead he immediately introduces the further examples of handing over (neighbour, Athenians, Great King), and proceeds remorselessly to the conclusion that Lysis is (useless and) unloved. But even this part of the argument itself quietly supplies material that works *against* the conclusion. First, the examples come to a climax with one that looks like an example of paternal love: why else would the Great King be so concerned for his son's eyesight if he didn't care for him – and why wouldn't Lysis' parents care for him in the same way?⁴⁹ Second, benefit is tied to knowledge and wisdom (210a–c again), in the absence of which one can only do 'what appears to us to be the thing to do' (210b7); and happiness, according to the earlier part of the argument too, is a question of getting benefit: that's why it matters to 'do what one wants'. So at 208e–209a: Lysis isn't able to

⁴⁹ The parallelism with Lysis' case is underlined by the detail that the King's son will take over from him (209d7), as Lysis will take over his father's affairs (c3–6).

benefit at all from all that money his family has, or even his own body . . . But if benefit, happiness, is tied to knowledge in this way, there won't be any grounds in Lysis' parents' behaviour for saying that they don't love him.

And that is the real position: there is, after all is said and done, nothing to prevent it from being true, even if Lysis doesn't recognize it, that his parents love him; and what is more, their behaviour towards him – allowing him to do some things, stopping him from doing others – will illustrate that they do. This looks very like what a few pages back we wondered at Socrates for not saying, when it seemed such an obvious thing to say.⁵⁰ But what he is getting at is a more specific, and more ambitious, point: that loving someone is wanting them to *be wise*,⁵¹ because benefit, happiness, depends on it; and this, as Socrates will show he understands the point, is far from being something obvious.⁵²

One of the most interesting features of the reading proposed is that it frees us from taking seriously not only the conclusion that Lysis' parents don't love him (which looks like a set-up in any case),⁵³ but the claim that one person only loves another insofar as they are 'useful and good' (210C–D). This immediately looks a perverse thing to claim: do parents only love their children for their usefulness (even if what is in question is the children's usefulness *to the children themselves*)? Don't they love new-born infants? And isn't it there a truth in our saying that we love our children most when they make mistakes? Now on the first point – don't parents love their infants, who can't be 'useful' even to themselves? – Plato might seem to be already ahead of us, since only a couple of Stephanus pages further on, at 212E7–213A3, he has Socrates using the idea (to Menexenus) that even our infant children are dear to us, dearest, even, when they seem to hate us and be furious at us; then, at 219D–220A, he introduces the example of a father who values his son over all his (other) possessions, which perhaps has its origins in, and embroiders on, the case of the Great King's attitude towards his son and heir in our present passage (209E–210A). It looks, then, as if Socrates himself is no supporter of the idea that parents love their children solely for their utility, say, as managers of their estate.

⁵⁰ See p. 25 above.

⁵¹ It might be thought that the child's lack of wisdom gives us a way in which the parents don't love the child. Certainly, they don't love the child's *present state of unwisdom*. But if loving the child is wanting the child to be happy, the mere fact that the child is currently unwise could hardly count against the parents' wanting the child to be happy by being wise.

⁵² Cf. n. 46 above: the *Lysis* will ultimately offer us a *theory* (of desire).

⁵³ Notwithstanding our earlier claim (p. 27 above) about the way the Socrates of the *Lysis* tests our assumptions, it would ultimately be hard to swallow any theory that started by disallowing parental love. But of course Socrates has still to find a way of accounting for it; see below.

Here we need a caveat. When Socrates gets fully into his stride in the latter parts of the *Lysis*, it may well look as if it *is*, after all, some sort of idea of ‘utility’ that dominates his treatment of *philia*: what we love, whenever we love (or wish, or desire, or . . .),⁵⁴ is the useful, the beneficial, or what is good for us. Let us be clear (though the clarification will to a degree anticipate both our own argument and that of the *Lysis*): what is good for us, in the context of the *Lysis* as a whole, is not the limited notion of utility as what is useful for some arbitrary purpose, but rather solely what is useful for our own overall good – something Aristotle, for example, will not call the useful, though for all that it is a genuine species of the useful. (The reader may be puzzled by the reference to ‘what is useful for our own good’: if so, we ask his or her patience. Our fullest, but by no means our first, take on this will be in Chapter II, §§7 and 8 below.) But that might still be enough to make the claim expressed in the last sentence of the last paragraph look problematical: does Socrates think our interpersonal relations are based on utility, or doesn’t he? Is he just confused on the issue?⁵⁵ Our own response (i.e. Penner’s and Rowe’s) to this question is emphatically negative: instead of accusing Socrates of confusion, we should be looking for some way of making sense of the notion that parental love, too, is a matter of our own good. This looks initially rather difficult, not just because of what are likely to be the parents’ own presuppositions,⁵⁶ but because on Socrates’ account *Lysis’* parents specifically want *his* happiness.⁵⁷ Even more difficult, perhaps, when their practice is said to be precisely to prevent him from doing things he doesn’t know about – and so from coming to harm (though as a matter of fact this isn’t actually mentioned), or from causing harm to others (also not mentioned, and in any case stopping one’s children from doing damage, even to oneself, doesn’t look like much of a gain). So what is in it, in such a case, for the parents? Why shouldn’t we attribute to the parents a purely altruistic love, with nothing in it that bears on the parents’ own good? Still more clearly in the case of the love of infants – what can possibly be *useful* for the parents in children who are not yet even able to walk, or talk?

Well, to answer the latter question first, one possibility is that loving our infant children – or indeed loving them when they are older, and wanting

⁵⁴ Cf. nn. 46, 52 above (with text to n. 17).

⁵⁵ Or, to put it more charitably (but not too much more charitably), is he just being unscrupulous – which would take us back again in the direction of a (CL)-type reading (i.e. one that takes Socrates as merely showing his cleverness: see p. 25 above)?

⁵⁶ We are, most of us, surely likely to want to say that real love and friendship will always be innocent of ‘ulterior’ motives (were that to be what is at issue here).

⁵⁷ That, indeed, is the very point that he actually started off from in 207D (and he shows no sign of wanting to withdraw it).

their happiness – might be ‘useful’, or beneficial, to us just insofar as it helps produce happiness for us. A typical modern view would hold that this is to cheapen parental love, by making it merely ‘instrumental’ (i.e. to the parents’ own ends). If the Socrates of the *Lysis* does indeed take such a position on parental love, then on this view he is missing the essential point: parents – if they love as they should (on this view) – desire their child’s happiness for the child’s sake, not for their own. Of course, the child’s happiness will make them happy too, but that is taken to be merely a bonus. It may even be a *guaranteed* bonus; still, to be what it should, on the typical modern view we are looking at, the love should be unmotivated by that.

Yet if the bonus is indeed guaranteed, how – one is entitled to wonder – can one ever be sure that one’s motives have that degree of purity? (Just how does one get to disregard one’s own happiness, when that is a certain consequence of the loving?) We shall return to such arguments later on in the book;⁵⁸ for now, it will be sufficient to indicate that ‘pure altruistic’ love – if what we identify as such is loving someone, even one’s own children, exclusively ‘for their own sake’, and entirely without regard to one’s own good – is itself likely to be a problematical notion, and that there is nothing necessarily demeaning about the proposal that our love for our children (or, *a fortiori*, our other ‘friends’, *philoī*) be motivated by the contribution it makes to our own happiness.⁵⁹ As for the other question (why isn’t *Lysis*’

⁵⁸ See Chapter 10, §3 and Chapter 12 below.

⁵⁹ We ourselves (Penner and Rowe) do not side with the view that the opposite of selfishness (caring for no one but oneself) is selflessness, as much Christian thought supposes (e.g. Thomas à Kempis; cf. George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, Bk 4, ch. 3, as well as John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ch. 3, paras. 9–10). Rather we suppose that the opposite of selfishness is a wise self-interest which sees how much one’s own happiness is bound up with the happiness of others, especially those one loves. We ourselves do not think it easy to see by what strenuous measures one might render parental love ‘pure’ on these Christian views. Nor do we think it easy to see why perceiving how the happiness of certain others makes us happy in any way disqualifies our feeling for those others as love. Yet just this is required if the opposite of selfishness is selflessness. For more on these points, see the later discussions in this book as referred to in the *preceding note*. For the time being, as a preliminary indication of the difficulties we believe are faced by the idea of love as requiring selflessness, we note how the following three passages from *Middlemarch* show even George Eliot falling into inconsistency over the issue:

- (1) ‘I’m afraid Fred is not to be trusted, Mary,’ said the father, with hesitating tenderness. ‘He means better than he acts, perhaps. But I should think it a pity for anybody’s happiness to be wrapped up in him, and so would your mother’ (ch. 25: Caleb Garth, one of the characters in *Middlemarch* most admired by the author);
- (2) ‘Rosamund . . . I cannot part my happiness from yours . . . When I hurt you, I hurt part of my own life’ (ch. 65: Lydgate), and
- (3) ‘. . . It was because he feels so much more about your happiness than anything else – he feels his life bound into one with yours, and it hurts him more than anything that his misfortunes must hurt you . . . ’ (ch. 81, Dorothea to Rosamund about Lydgate).

parents' love for him an altruistic one?), one can only say that that idea doesn't clearly surface anywhere in the *Lysis*, unless it is in the present conversation between Lysis and Socrates – and even there it is not explicitly mentioned; one is tempted to supply it only because parental love turns out after all (for the moment) not to be said to be based on utility.⁶⁰ Lysis' parents certainly want him to be happy, but there's no reason why that should not be as part of their own life plan.⁶¹

4 RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

Our proposal, then, is that the real outcomes of 207B8–210D8 are quite different from what Socrates pretends them to be: the point is not that Lysis' parents don't love him, but rather that, if they do, then what they want for him is wisdom, because loving someone is, or includes, wanting them to be happy and being happy is or depends on wisdom. This reading of the passage in our view succeeds in accounting for the *detail*, and also the *peculiarities*, of Socrates' argument in a way that other readings have not. Now most readers of this book will be happy with the general claim that Plato does not expect us to go along with Socrates' actual conclusion; they may be more resistant to our claim about what the implied, and real, outcomes of 207B–210D are. Faced with such a reaction, we would respond in two ways: first, by asking that any rival interpretation pay the same respect as we propose ours does to the finer points of what is actually in Plato's text; and second, by asking the reader to stick with us and see how things turn out. Among the dividends, we claim, will be a clear connection

We take it that it was *not* George Eliot's wish that we understand that Mary doesn't really love Fred or that Lydgate doesn't love Rosamund. Yet that is exactly what she should be saying if she is to require that love be selfless.

⁶⁰ Once again, it is worth emphasizing that the benefit or advantage of the one loving is not talked about in the argument, only that of the one loved; 'without benefit' (*anōphēlēs*) in 210C6, 'useless' (*achrēstos*) in c8, and 'useful and good' (*chrēsimos . . . kai agathos*) in D2 all need to be read in light of 210A9–C4, and so in terms of the uselessness/usefulness of a person *to himself*. See *following note*.

⁶¹ We thus firmly resist the temptation, to which e.g. Vlastos succumbs (1981 [1969]: 7–8), to suppose that what Socrates intends is to say that Lysis' parents will not love him unless he is useful to them. Vlastos notes that Jowett unjustifiably supplies 'to him' in his translation of 210C7–8 as 'Then neither does your father love you, nor does anybody love anybody else, in so far as he is useless to him.' Then, after talking about the deplorable egocentricity of this utility-love, Vlastos himself goes on to say that the rest of the dialogue does indeed display a 'straightforward utility-love' of this sort, and that after all Jowett was right in his sense of this earlier passage, even if not in his translation of it. In rejecting this claim of Vlastos', we are by no means denying that the account of 'love' later in the dialogue is egoistic, merely that that account plays the role that Vlastos suggests in the argument of 207B–210D. Vlastos' position seems to do rather too little justice either to the *plot* of the *Lysis* or to the detail of its argument, and comes close to impugning Plato's, if not Socrates', good faith (either 'utility-love' is in the present passage, or it is not).

between the present section of the *Lysis* and the end-point of the dialogue, and a reasonably direct line of argument between this present section and that end-point.

Of course, as we have seen, Socrates has been up to other things too: not just staking some philosophical claims, while appearing to refute Lysis, but also giving Hippothales the demonstration he needed of how to talk to a beloved, humbling Lysis,⁶² playing, dealing in paradoxes, punning.⁶³ Up to this point we have treated these different aspects primarily insofar as they might seem to invite different types of reading: if there is no clear and substantive philosophical content, the view might be, then we had better treat it all as a matter of opportunism, or mischievousness, or both. But if we may be allowed, in light of our analysis of the passage, to suppose that there *is* a serious, and substantial, philosophical purpose to it all, then there will be a need for another way of explaining the peculiar combination of the serious and the unserious, or less serious, that both this and other parts of the *Lysis* appear to exhibit.⁶⁴ One way to such an explanation, we suggest, starts with the observation that Plato has so constructed this particular stretch of the dialogue – as, we shall argue, he constructs others – in order to allow for *different levels of understanding* on the part of the interlocutors. Lysis has no clear idea, yet, of what Socrates is up to; *he* can only see it all in terms of what has been done to him (hence the request he will make to Socrates at 211a4–5, to do the same to Menexenus as he's just done to him). Meanwhile, Hippothales is ‘struggling with himself and confused by what was said’ (210e5–6), as well he might be. Later on, he will show that he has very little notion of what is going on in the whole conversation between Socrates and the two boys. But he might be expected to be confused especially by the conclusion that no one can love Lysis, or anyone, until he, or they, become ‘useful’; and if Lysis can’t see what’s wrong with it, there probably isn’t much hope for Hippothales. What is *his* attitude to be, then, to Lysis (should *he*, Hippothales, love him?); and how will it all reflect on himself (see 205d–206a)? Socrates, for his part, must be on the same level of understanding as Plato, since presumably his complex strategy would have had to be worked out in full, in advance. When Menexenus comes back, we shall find that *his* level of understanding

⁶² The final humbling of Lysis is noticeably kept separate from the refutation; he isn’t humbled because he’s been refuted, but just because he’s still going to school (210d4–8) – which is just as well, given the quality of the refutation: see above.

⁶³ The punning is on ‘thinking’, *phronein*, in 210d.

⁶⁴ Not so ‘peculiar’, perhaps, if one thinks of Plato generally; but it is the *Lysis* that we are presently discussing.

is also different from Lysis' and everyone else's: he is perhaps less quick to catch on, and to put things together, than Lysis (who, after all, has a head start on him), but certainly quicker than the unfortunate Hippothales.

This layered structure is, we believe, typical of the *Lysis* as a whole. Its purpose, or at any rate its effect, is to allow the reader to enter the conversation at different levels, and in the ideal case to compare those levels with each other. Towards the end, crucially, we shall implicitly be asked, along with Lysis and Menexenus, whether we are prepared to go along with Socrates' argument or whether we prefer to stay with our own assumptions and intuitions. But that – or so we have urged – is no more than we have been challenged to do, even in the present, initial conversation between Socrates and Lysis. It is open to us to start by insisting on our ways of seeing things. But if we do, then (so our proposal implies) we are in danger of missing out on Socrates' argument,⁶⁵ which is presumably what is of primary interest. Like Lysis, however, we shall be given another chance. The argument will be continued (despite the appearance of a clear break) in the next section and beyond, enabling Socrates to reinforce, clarify and amplify the positions so far adumbrated. But in the meantime he has given us a glimpse of his subject-matter, of his methods, of his *insouciance* in the face of what we, like his immediate audience, are likely to classify as paradox; and, not least, a glimpse of what we shall argue will be the main conclusion of the dialogue: that all desire for the good – the good of oneself in, amongst other things, the good of those one loves – is, in the end, the desire for wisdom, both for oneself and also, therefore, for those one loves.

⁶⁵ It might be said that it has required a considerable effort to extract the proposed reading from Plato's text. Our claim, however, is actually to have done nothing more than to follow out the detail of that text, and explain as many of its features as possible. It is our view – and indeed something that forms part of our overall reading: see above – that the *Lysis* is an extraordinarily complex, and rich, work. It takes time to tease out the different threads, so carefully entwined by the author in pursuit of his main objective, i.e. to offer a philosophical challenge to those who are prepared to be challenged philosophically.

CHAPTER 3

2I0EI–2I3C9: Socrates and Menexenus – how does one get a friend?

On first reading, and even twentieth reading, the [next section](#) (we shall call it ‘the Menexenus discussion’) is one of the most baffling passages in the *Lysis*. It is baffling because it is difficult to see what it accomplishes philosophically, and so also because it is difficult to see how it accomplishes anything that is of the slightest use to the forward motion of the dialogue. At any rate, this represents an accurate description of our (Penner’s and Rowe’s) history with the passage; it probably also covers the experience of most previous interpreters, the majority of whom appear to have given up on the Menexenus discussion completely, concluding that it plays either wittingly or unwittingly on ambiguities (readings which, again, will affect the global interpretation of the *Lysis*: if there is dishonesty or confusion here, why not elsewhere?). We ourselves, indeed, came close to the same sort of judgement, being strongly tempted by the view that the best we could say of it was that it showed Socrates giving Menexenus the eristic a dose of his own medicine (see Chapter [2](#) above, text to n. [6](#)).

We have, however, finally come to a clear view of the philosophical importance of the passage, within the economy of the whole. The key difficulty turned out to be our resistance to having Socrates anticipate assumptions that he will justify only later: even though, as we suppose, the argument will work sufficiently well without those assumptions to carry the immediate interlocutors, Lysis and Menexenus, along with it, and to secure their agreement with Socrates, the full defence of at least one crucial claim will require the deployment of resources which have yet to be introduced, that is, in this particular context, and in this particular conversation. Looked at in one way, this is no more than another case of the *Lysis*’ operating at, and addressing, different levels of understanding (see the concluding paragraphs of Chapter [2](#) above). The argument works in one way for those who share the interlocutors’ assumptions, in another for Socrates, whose assumptions are different. But if Plato is indeed working like this here in the Menexenus discussion, that will also have significant implications for our

take on Socrates' general position *vis-à-vis* his subject and his interlocutors. Above all, it confirms that he knows where he, and the conversation, is going. This does not prevent it all from being exploration of a kind, since Socrates has still to get Lysis and Menexenus to the right destination, and – if we look at it from within the dramatic context – he does not know how they are going to respond at any point, even if he might be able to make a pretty good guess. Nor, if Socrates *does* know where he is going, is this inconsistent with his claim at 204B–C to be 'useless' in (virtually) everything: it is one thing to have worked out a general philosophical position, of the kind that he will appear as sponsoring, and as having justified, but it is quite another to put that general position to practical use. But we need to be clear (so we propose, and we think the proposal amply justified) that the Socrates of the *Lysis* is not, by any stretch of the imagination, *starting from scratch*, in the way that Lysis, Menexenus and perhaps most of us, his hearers/readers, will be doing. Socrates is no naïve researcher, looking into a topic with an open mind and an empty notebook, but rather (like most real researchers) he begins with a clear vision of where it will all end up.

(a) TRANSLATION

[To 210EI–213C9, we tag on 213C9–214AI for good measure, though the latter will be mainly treated in Chapter 4 below.]

'Neither, then, is there anything big about your thoughts, if in fact you're still thoughtless.'

'Zeus!' he [Lysis] said; 'Socrates, it doesn't seem to me that there is.'

210EI When I heard his answer, I glanced at Hippothales, and almost slipped up; what came into my head was to say 'That, Hippothales, is how one *should* converse (*dialogesthai*) with one's beloved, humbling him and cutting him down to size, not puffing him up, as you are doing, and praising him to pieces.' **210ES** Well, when I saw him struggling with himself and thrown into confusion by what was being said, I remembered that he had even placed himself so as to avoid Lysis' noticing him, so I managed to catch myself and **211AI** bite my tongue. In the meantime, Menexenus had come back and was sitting himself down in the place he'd got up from. At which point Lysis, in a very playful and friendly fashion,¹ and without Menexenus noticing, said to me in a quiet voice 'Socrates, what you're saying **211AS** to me – say it to Menexenus as well!'²

¹ So Lysis took his treatment well, at one and the same time apparently enjoying it and taking it as friendly on Socrates' part.

² The fact that Lysis wants Socrates to say the same things to Menexenus suggests that he takes the refutation he has just undergone as a set piece (an *epideixis*) on Socrates' part – perhaps a pleasing bit of eristic (see Chapter 2 above, n. 5, and text to n. 5)? See also next two notes, and text below.

To which I said ‘That *you’ll* tell him, Lysis, because you were paying complete attention.’

‘Yes, absolutely,’ he said.

‘Try, then,’ I said, ‘to recall it as far as 211B1 you can, so that you can report everything clearly to him; and if you forget anything, ask me again when you come across me next.’

‘I’ll do that, Socrates,’ he said; ‘very much so, you can be sure of it. But say something else to him, so that I too can hear it, 211B5 until it’s time for us to leave for home.’³

‘This I must do,’ I said, ‘seeing that you’re telling me to, as well. But make sure you come to my assistance, in case Menexenus tries to refute me; or don’t you know he’s a great one for disputing [he’s *eristikos*]?’⁴

‘Zeus, yes,’ he said, ‘very much so; that’s exactly why I want (*boulomai*) 211C1 you to have a conversation (*dialogesthai*)⁵ with him.’

‘So I can make myself ridiculous (*katagelastos*)?’

‘Zeus, no,’ he said; ‘so you can give him some punishment (*kolazein*).’

‘How’s that going to happen?’ I said. ‘It won’t be easy; he’s a clever one – 211C5 a pupil of Ctesippus’. And I tell you, he’s here, the man himself, Ctesippus: don’t you see him?’

‘Don’t worry about a thing, Socrates,’ he said; ‘just go on and have a conversation (*dialogesthai*) with him.’

‘A conversation is what I must have,’ I said.

211C10 As we were saying these things to each other, Ctesippus said ‘Why are you having a private party, the two of you, and not sharing 211D1 what you’re saying with us?’

‘Of course we must share with you,’ I said. ‘There’s a part of what I’m saying which this person here doesn’t understand, and claims to think Menexenus knows about; so he’s telling me to ask him.’⁶

211D5 ‘So why not ask him?’ he said.

‘Indeed I *shall* ask him,’ I said. ‘So tell me, Menexenus, whatever I ask you.⁷ Since I was a boy I’ve actually always had a desire (*epithumein*) for a certain kind of possession (*ktēma*), like everyone else, only it’s different things for different people: one person has a desire 211E1 to get (*ktasthai*) horses, while for another it’s dogs, for another, gold, for another, public honours; but as for me, I don’t get excited about these things – what I’m absolutely passionate [*panu erōtikōs* (sc. *echō*)] about is getting (*ktasthai*) friends (*philoī*), and I’d wish for (*boulesīhai*) a

³ Lysis does not seem to expect to continue any sort of conversation with Socrates himself, but rather seems to be inviting new set pieces. Does this suggest that his own previous experience has been restricted to eristics?

⁴ See Chapter 2 above (text to and following n. 5), where there is extended discussion of Socrates’ reference to Menexenus as ‘eristic’.

⁵ What *sort* of conversation Lysis wants him to have with Menexenus, Lysis’ next contribution shows (not a philosophical kind – unless philosophical conversations are about ‘punishing’ people; which they are not, by Lysis’ lights, though Socrates’ position might be different: see *Gorgias* 505c).

⁶ So, Socrates suggests, Lysis is in need of Menexenus’ wisdom; cf. 207D1–2 (do they dispute over which of them is the wiser?).

⁷ And why not, if he has the answers?

good friend (*philos*) more than for the best example any man has of a quail or **211E5** a cock, and – Zeus! – I'd wish, myself, more for that than for the best horse and dog; and I do believe – I swear by the Dog!⁸ – more than the gold of Darius I'd much sooner get me a friend (*hetairos*),⁹ or rather, more than getting Darius himself;¹⁰ that's how much of a friend-lover (*philetairo*) I am. So **212A1** when I see the two of you, you and Lysis, I'm overcome, and call you happy because at such a young age you're able to acquire this possession (*to ktēma . . . ktasthai*) quickly and easily – you've acquired (*ktasthai*) him as a friend (*philos*) like this, quickly and firmly, and similarly he's acquired you; whereas, as for me, I'm so far away from **212A5** having the possession (*porrō . . . tou ktēmatos*) that I don't even know in what way one person becomes a friend (*philos*) of another. But these are the very things I want to ask you about, because you're experienced in them. So tell me: when someone loves (*philein*)¹¹ a person, which of the two is it that **212B1** becomes a friend (*philos*) – the one who loves (*ho philōn*), of the one who is loved (*ho philoumenos*), or the one who is loved of the one who loves? Or does it make no difference?

'It seems to me,' he said, 'that it makes no difference.'

'What do you mean?' I said. 'Do both, then, become friends (*philoī*) of each other, if just one of them loves (*philein*) the **212B5** other?'

'It seems so to me,' he said.

'What about this: isn't it possible for someone who loves (*philein*) not to be loved in return (*antiphileisthai*) by this person that he loves?'

'It is.'

'And what about this: is it possible even to be hated (*miseisthai*) when one loves? The sort of thing, I imagine, that lovers (*erastai*) too sometimes think they experience from their darlings (*paidika*): they love (*philein*) **212C1** as much as

⁸ Or just 'By the Dog!' Apparently a favourite oath of Socrates', it has a form, in the Greek, similar to that of 'Zeus!' in the line before; if, as the story goes, it began life as a way of avoiding swearing by the gods, it evidently has no such function for Plato's Socrates (sparked off here by the reference to ordinary dogs, it even seems to *trump* his own oath 'by Zeus' in E5).

⁹ Here as before (see 204A5, 206D4; cf. Chapter 1, n. 22 above) *hetairos* is treated as interchangeable with *philos* (E3); Socrates seems to employ it as a variant, after *philoī* in E2 and *philos* in E3.

¹⁰ Editors have found problems with the text here: 'or rather, more than getting Darius himself represents an emended text (*mallon <de> ē auton Dareion*), another solution being just to omit *mallon ē auton Dareion* altogether (as a gloss?). But 'more than getting Darius himself' actually makes rather good sense, in a context where getting friends is implicitly treated as getting another kind of possession – something that will be underlined by the momentary treatment of 'getting Darius' as like getting a horse or a dog ('I'd wish, myself, more for [a good friend] than for the best horse and dog'). (We moderns tend to shy away from the idea of love as involving possession. In case it would be too close to home to urge the desire to marry as an example, there are at any rate genuine cases of adoptive couples who want to acquire a child and whose search – no one would have reason to deny – is to find an object for their love. See further below, esp. n. 28.)

¹¹ It would be better and easier for the translator if English, like Greek, had cognate words for 'friend' and what friends do, i.e. love (*philos*, noun; *philein*, verb). But then 'friend' is a pretty inadequate rendering of *philos* in any case: not only are relatives included among one's *philoī* (Chapter 2, n. 37 above), but the *Lysis*, as we shall soon see (cf. n. 13 below), will treat *anything* loved (i.e. anything that is the object of *philein*) as a 'friend' (*philon*).

anyone could, but some of them think that they're not loved in return, while others think they're even hated.¹² Or doesn't this seem true to you?"

'Yes,' he said, 'very true.'

'Well then, in such a case,' I said, 'one person loves and the other is loved.'

'Yes.'

'Which of the two of them, 212C5 then, is a friend of which? The one who loves of the one who is loved, whether he is also loved in return or is even hated, or the one who is loved of the one who is loved? Or again is *neither* of them, in such a case, a friend of *neither*, unless both of them love each other?'

'It appears, at any rate, 212D1 to be like that.'

'In that case it seems differently to us now from the way it seemed before. For then, if one of the two loved, it seemed to us that both were friends; but now, unless both love, neither is a friend.'

'Possibly,' he said.

'In that case nothing¹³ is friend to the one loving unless 212D5 it loves in return.'

'It appears not.'

'In that case, there aren't horse-lovers (*philippoi*) either, when the horses don't love them back, or quail-lovers, or for that matter dog-lovers and wine-lovers and exercise-lovers and wisdom-lovers (*philo-sophoi*) – unless wisdom (*sophia*) loves them in return. Or *does* each of these types love 212E1 the things in question, but without the things being friends (*phila*), so that the poet lied when he said "Happy the man who has friends: children and solid-hoofed horses, | hounds for the hunt, and a host abroad"?¹⁴

212E5 'It doesn't seem so to me,' he said.

'He seems to you to be saying the truth?'

'Yes.'

'What's loved, in that case, is a friend to the one loving, it appears, Menexenus, whether it loves him or, even, hates him; as for example with recently born children, in some respects not yet loving, in 213A1 others even hating, when they are disciplined [*kolazesthai*, 'punished'] by their mother or by their

¹² A doff of the cap to Hippothales, presumably, who precisely (according to his own lights) loves Lysis 'as much as anyone could'. See 222A6–7 for a further such reference to Hippothales' case, which will appear (misleadingly) to reassure him about Lysis' response to him.

¹³ This sudden use of the neuter gender in place of the masculine, necessitated by the fact that non-human objects of *philia* are about to be introduced, would probably have been less surprising to Menexenus than it is to us ('philos', like English 'dear', fits both persons and other things loved); but since up to now the conversation between him and Socrates has dealt exclusively in masculines, even he might have thought that the discussion was restricted to interpersonal relationships.

Why not translate *philos* as 'dear', then, if it fits better than 'friend' (especially since *philos* is also, and primarily, an adjective: 'friendly' will be even worse)? The answer is that 'dear' is no easier to sustain in all contexts in the *Lysis* than 'friend'; 'dear' as a noun, except in e.g. 'my dear', does not work (are Lysis and Menexenus 'dears' of each other?), nor does 'dearness' for *philia* ('friendship' throughout the present volume; but see e.g. n. 11 above, n. 15 below).

¹⁴ Solon fr. 23 Edmonds; a closer translation of the elegiac couplet would be '... who has beloved (*philo*) children and solid-hoofed horses ...' with the adjective attaching to all four nouns.

father – nevertheless even when hating, at that moment they are most of all dearest of friends¹⁵ to their parents.'

'It seems to me it's like that,' he said.

'It's not, then, the one loving that's a friend (*philos*), from this argument, 213A5 but the one loved.'

'It appears so.'

'And it's the one hated, too, then, that's an enemy (*echthros*), not the one hating.'
'Evidently.'¹⁶

'Many, then, are loved by their enemies, and hated by their friends, and are 213B1 friends to their enemies and enemies to their friends, if it's what's loved that's a friend (*philon*) and not what loves.¹⁷ And yet it's highly unreasonable, my dear friend (*o phile btaire*), or rather, I think, it's actually impossible, to be enemy to friend and friend to enemy.'

'You appear, Socrates,' 213B5 he said, 'to be saying the truth.'

'Well then, if this is impossible, what loves will be friend of what's loved.'¹⁸
'Evidently.'

'What hates, then, conversely, will be enemy of what's hated.'

'Necessarily.'

'Well then, it's going to turn out that we'll have necessarily to agree to the same 213C1 things as we did in the previous cases, that often a friend is friend of a non-friend, and often even of an enemy, that is, when either a person loves something that doesn't love him or he loves something that even hates him; and that often enemy is enemy of non-enemy or even of friend, that is, when either a person hates something that doesn't hate him or hates something that even loves him.'

213C5 'Possibly (*kinduneuei*),' he said.

'So what are we going to do,' I said, 'if neither those who love are going to be friends, nor the ones who are loved, nor those who love and are loved? Shall we say that besides these,¹⁹ there are still others of some sort that become friends to each other?'

'I don't – Zeus!' he said: 'Socrates, I don't see any way out at all.'²⁰

213D1 'Is it perhaps, Menexenus,' I said, 'that we weren't inquiring (*zetein*) in the right way at all?'

¹⁵ In the Greek, just 'dearest', 'most loved' (*philtata*). So: 'friendship' in the context of the *Lysis* is broad enough to include parental love as well as sexual passion (n. 11 above), and also love of things.

¹⁶ Or 'apparently' – but 'evidently' (= 'apparently' or 'clearly', 'plainly'), here and in B6 below, is intended to preserve the ambiguity of the Greek *phainetai*. Given that loving and hating work in the same way, Menexenus can scarcely resist the new move, having conceded the last, i.e. in A4–5; but equally, if he was hesitant about that ('It appears so,' A5), he will be equally hesitant about accepting Socrates' corresponding point about hating.

¹⁷ The neuters here as it were embrace the masculine, as they will do frequently in what follows; the argument has by now become entirely abstract and general.

¹⁸ I.e. if it is impossible that *echthros* hate *philos* and that *philos* love *echthros*, we get, after all, that when *x* loves *y*, *x* is *philos* of *y*, not *y* of *x*.

¹⁹ 'These' (i.e. these options/items?) is in the neuter, the following 'others of some sort' is in the masculine.

²⁰ It looks as if this reply is primarily to Socrates' first question ('So what are we going to do . . . ?'); Menexenus just assumes that there aren't any other options available, as he reasonably might. But see below.

'I think so, Socrates,' said Lysis, and blushed as he said it; for it seemed to me that the words escaped without his wanting them to (*akōnti*), because of the intensity with which he was paying attention 213D5 to what was being said, and it was clear that it was the same, too, all the while he was listening.

So, because I wished to give Menexenus a breather, and also felt delight at the other's love for wisdom (*philosophia*), I changed things round, turning the discussion (*tous logous*) 213E1 in Lysis' direction. I said:

'Lysis, what you're saying seems true to me, that if we were investigating in the right way, we'd never be lost in the way we are now. But let's not go along this way any longer – for the investigation appears to me one of a difficult sort, like a difficult road – but 213E5 where we made the turning, that's where it seems to me we should go, [sc. this time?] investigating the things²¹ 214A1 the poets tell us . . .' (210E1–214A1)

(b) SOME PRELIMINARIES

Part of the purpose of the previous section of the *Lysis* (207B8–210D8) was of course to demonstrate to Hippothales how to talk to a beloved: by humbling him. But we claimed that 207B8–210D8 also had serious philosophical content. And here, at the beginning of our new passage, Socrates clearly signals just that. First, there is his description of Hippothales as *agōniōnta kai tethorubēmenon*, 'struggling with himself and thrown into confusion by what was being said' (210E5–6). It's certainly the oddest of lessons the poor man has just heard: however much, or little, he has understood, and never mind the conclusion that Lysis is 'thoughtless',²² it is about as far removed as it could be from anything *Hippothales* might ever have thought of saying to his beloved, or could imagine anyone else wanting to say in such circumstances. So we might well infer, from his incomprehension, that Hippothales is meant to have missed something important in what Socrates has said. Second, and more interesting, there is Socrates' reaction to Lysis' whispered request to him to say to the now returned Menexenus what he has just said to Lysis: 'That *you'll* tell him, Lysis, because you were paying complete attention. Try then . . . to recall it as far as you can, so that you can report everything clearly to him; and if you forget anything, try asking me again when you come across me next' (211A9–B2).

So there was evidently something in it for Lysis, and for Menexenus too; at this point we have passed beyond the requirements of Hippothales, the lover. Socrates himself seems to suggest that what he said was carefully

²¹ For the Greek text we read and translate here, see Chapter 4 below.

²² I.e. *aphrōn*, 210D7: a word that Hippothales might even hear as 'silly'.

put together to achieve this further purpose; anything Lysis forgets, he, Socrates, will supply again on some future occasion. But he is also, perhaps, administering the lightest of rebukes: it is not, after all, a game, as Lysis' initial attitude suggests ('Do it to Menexenus too!'). At the same time, 211A–B has the effect of transforming the Lysis-Socrates section into a miniature version of a Platonic dialogue – to be 'reported' by Lysis to Menexenus in the same way as Socrates reports the conversation of the *Lysis* to his hearers (readers).²³ Are we too, perhaps, being exhorted not to miss a single word? (It is not just Hippothales, at any rate, or Lysis, that needs to listen.)

The exchange that follows, between Socrates and Menexenus (the one just translated: the 'Menexenus discussion'), displays the same sort of mixture as that between Socrates and Lysis: formally negative, but designed nevertheless to take things forward philosophically. On the surface, it ends in *aporia*, or perplexity: *ou panu euporō*, says Menexenus at 213C9: 'I don't see any way out at all,' 'I'm completely at a loss.' But Socrates' first response to Menexenus' bafflement, here at the end of the ('Menexenus') discussion, is to suggest that they were looking at things in completely the wrong way (213D1), and Lysis enthusiastically agrees – then blushes with embarrassment. Socrates privately surmises that Lysis spoke without thinking, because he had been concentrating so hard ('even while he was listening, his concentration was evident': 213D5), and applauds his *philosophia*, his love of, desire for, wisdom. 'It seems to me,' he says out loud, 'that you're right in saying that if we were investigating in the right way, we'd never be lost in the way we are now' (213E1–3: for all of this see the translation of the Menexenus discussion above, to which we appended its immediate sequel).

But in one way Lysis, at least, is now absolutely on track. We pointed out that, at the end of his refutation by Socrates, Lysis showed some tendency to regard the refutation as an ('eristical') game in which he was outmanoeuvred. But now he has been caught up in *philosophia*, a love for the wisdom his initial discussion with Socrates showed him to be lacking. It is no longer just a matter of his and Menexenus' being defeated in a game. Some serious truths are being sought – and it is now of the essence that they together find the right path and discover those truths. What Lysis has seen is that Socrates was not just trying to defeat Menexenus, but questioning him *as part of a search for real answers to real questions*; and it is reasonable to suppose that he also now sees that this is what Socrates was doing with him (whatever else he may have been doing, especially for Hippothales; but Lysis was of course not party to that). We propose, then, that Lysis' reaction at 213D2

²³ It would most closely resemble some of the shorter dialogues, but with the difference that, while some of those show Socrates deflating people who claim to have knowledge, here Lysis is being shown to be ignorant even before he's claimed to know anything (except that his parents love him).

is continuous with, if a development of, his reaction to his own refutation earlier. What makes us propose this? We think it reasonable to conjecture that Socrates' praise of the love of wisdom evidenced by Lysis' outburst is Plato's subtle means of suggesting to the reader that Lysis suspects – what Menexenus has no grounds yet for suspecting – that those real answers being sought to the question 'What is the *philos*?' have something to do with wisdom. This, even though Lysis has no idea yet of what *exactly* it has to do with wisdom – any more than we do, as readers. It will be a major purpose of the remainder of this preliminary section of the present chapter to confirm the reasonableness of such a conjecture.

In any case, in the discussion – so Socrates says – they somehow 'made a turning' off the 'road' of the investigation, and now they need to get back on to it where they were: 'But let's not go along this way any longer – for the investigation appears to me one of a difficult sort, like a difficult road – but where we made the turning, that's where it seems to me we should go . . .' (213e3–5). Evidently they were going well until they went off in the wrong direction. (At what point was that? This, clearly, is a question we shall have to answer.) The simile of the road, to which Socrates seems here to draw particular attention, again carries positive implications: somehow or other, he and the boys²⁴ can hope to be making progress again, as they were before. Furthermore, Socrates evidently *means* the new exchange to take things forward, as his remark to Ctesippus shows (211d2–4): 'There's a part of what I'm saying which this person here doesn't understand, and claims to think Menexenus knows about; so he's telling me to ask him.' This isn't quite what happened, as we know (211a4–b5), but is close enough; in any case it clearly suggests that the new exchange is intended to be continuous with the first. So too Socrates' remark to Lysis at 211b6–7: 'This I must do [sc. say something else to Menexenus]', I said, 'seeing that you're telling me to, *as well*' – he doesn't need any instruction from Lysis in order to carry on what is already, for him, a philosophical discussion.

Given that we are meant to be moving forward, that remark of Socrates' – 'There's a part of what I'm saying which this person here doesn't understand, and claims to think Menexenus knows about . . .' – deserves more attention. Is this merely a pretext for his turning to question Menexenus (we grant that it is at least that)? The reader, and Socrates, know it is untrue that Lysis

²⁴ Even though only Lysis has received Socrates' silent accolade for his love of wisdom, the 'we' here certainly still includes both boys; Menexenus was one of those who made the wrong turning, and will be involved in the discussion again later on. He may not be as attentive, and quick, as Lysis (it is Lysis who has seen, or claims to have seen, something that Menexenus – it seems – hasn't: contrast the expectations Socrates and Lysis supposedly have of Menexenus at 211d, a passage immediately to be quoted in the text below), but once again there are no textual grounds for putting him in a different category from Lysis.

has said that there is something Menexenus will understand which Lysis does not. So we can certainly take the reference to such a claim by Lysis to be mere pretext. But we can also take it as an ironic suggestion to others present that Menexenus precisely *doesn't* understand better than Lysis – the truth of which is confirmed by the differing responses of the two boys at the end of the discussion (213C–D), and by the difference between Menexenus' and Lysis' responses at 222A4 (see Chapter 6 below). Menexenus is someone else who is about to be exposed, who perhaps thinks he knows something important when he does not. As for Socrates' other claim in 211D1–3, namely that there's something Lysis doesn't understand, this much is surely meant to be true; conversely, the implication is that there are some things he really does understand – it's only *part*, 'something' (*ti*), of what Socrates is saying that he's not grasping. So he will actually be ahead of Menexenus, who was not there even to hear what Socrates said ('is saying'). And this is consistent with what will transpire in the post-mortem on the argument in 213D–E: Lysis apparently is there seeing something that Menexenus does not – but, as we shall argue, he is still missing something that *Socrates* sees. So what is it that Lysis grasps, but not Menexenus, and what is that Socrates grasps, but not Lysis? We get some indications from Socrates' little introduction to the 'Menexenus discussion' (211D6–212A7).

The formal conclusion of Socrates' conversation with Lysis was that his parents don't love him; now he represents himself as someone without a friend – or rather, a good friend (a *philos agathos*).²⁵ It's something he's always wanted, a good friend, more than anything else. Other people want to own horses, dogs, a pile of gold, honours, and so on; he himself is unmoved by such things, instead being passionate about getting friends – so passionate, indeed, that not only would he prefer a good friend to anything else he can think of, but his syntax noticeably goes to pieces even for talking

²⁵ It is the *good* friend (*philos agathos*) that is mentioned at E3; if in E7 Socrates talks just about wanting a friend (*hetairos*), the context clearly shows that 'good' needs to be supplied (*hetairos, sc. agathos*). No doubt (a) we will do well to understand 'good' in 'good friend' here in the same way as in 'good quail', etc., i.e. as good of its kind, or (as one might spell this out) answering to some interests built into the kind quail. The evidence for adopting this sort of treatment of 'good' in such cases (*Lesser Hippias* 373C–375D, *Republic* I, 352D–353E) provides evidence also for the further hypothesis (b) that 'good of its kind' is to be understood in terms of the function assigned to that kind. And (c) that function, in the present context, can hardly fail to be relevant to Socrates' motives for wishing to acquire a friend. With (c), of course, appears a further good besides 'good of its kind' (i.e. good at fulfilling a certain function): the further good that is the aim of the function – health, as opposed to a good doctor; and, as we shall see, happiness, as opposed to being good at being human. (By contrast with modern philosophy, Socrates appears to hold that things 'good of their kind' are actually only hypothetically good, *not* categorically *good of their kind*. The means is not independent of the end.) We are not saying that any such points as those in (b) and (c) are explicit in the present context, but they should be stored up for use later (especially in Chapter II: see Chapter II, n. 24).

about it (this in the sentence from 211D7–E8, ending ‘that’s how much of a friend-lover *I am*’). And when he sees Lysis and Menexenus apparently having got just what he’s always wanted, so quickly and so emphatically – Lysis his friend Menexenus, and Menexenus his friend Lysis – he’s overcome, struck with amazement (*ekpeplēgmai*, 212A1). So: what he really wants is a good friend.²⁶ But so far is he from possessing a good friend that he doesn’t even know ‘in what way one person becomes a friend of another’ (211D6–212A7).

The immediate and obvious implication of this is that Socrates wants to have a good friend in the way that Menexenus has Lysis and Lysis has Menexenus. That is how the two boys must take it, especially in light of the tremendous compliment it pays them to be treated as a model. But later developments make it hard to resist supposing that Socrates is also up to something else; in particular, that he is already looking forward to the idea of the ‘first friend’ (see Chapter 2, §3 above, Chapter 5 below). The ‘first friend’, after all, will turn out to be a *true* ‘friend’ (*philon*), and as such a true *good* (*agathon*). It will in fact be the only thing that any desiring subject desires; precisely the sort of object a person would be ‘absolutely passionate about’, as Socrates describes his own attitude towards the acquisition of friends (211E2–3).²⁷ The idea of acquisition is prominent in the passage, the verb *ktasthai*, ‘acquire’ (perfect *kektēsthai*, ‘possess’), and the noun *ktēma*, ‘thing acquired’, ‘possession’, together appearing seven times in all (the occurrences are marked in the translation of the passage in §(a) above). What Socrates wants is to *get* and *possess* a good friend. This kind of language is not likely to seem to the modern reader obviously appropriate for describing any but the most basic of interpersonal relationships, and indeed Greeks of the classical period themselves would be more likely to talk of acquiring and possessing slaves than of acquiring or possessing friends. This in itself tends to confirm that more is going on than meets the eye. It is not so much that the language of acquisition and possession cannot be used in the context of human friendship and love; rather that such repeated and emphatic use of such language surely *seems* out of place in such a context.²⁸

²⁶ Right at the end of the dialogue, Socrates will count himself as being a friend of the two boys (223B6–7); but that is then, and this is now, when the dialogue between them is only beginning.

²⁷ ‘I’m absolutely passionate’ renders the Greek (*echō*) *panu erōtikōs*, where the adverb *erōtikōs* is cognate with the verb *eran* and the noun *erōs*. The root can be used of any intense desire, but usually refers to *sexual* passion; the idea that Socrates *eran* (the acquisition of) *philoī*, who are usually sharply distinguished from the objects of sexual passion, is no doubt intentionally striking.

²⁸ The references to acquisition and possession here remind us of Anders Nygren’s perfectly correct comment (Nygren (1953) 1930 : 166–81) on *erōs* in the *Symposium* that it is an acquisitive love: the aim of love is, egocentrically, to acquire something for oneself (cf. the discussion of love in relation

But suppose that there is such an object as our (so far still mysterious) object, the ‘first friend’, that is the (ultimate) object of our love. Then talk of acquiring such an object may not seem so inappropriate. (To see that this is so, turn away for a moment from the present account of the ‘first friend’ to the Augustinian example introduced in the last footnote: love for God as the yearning for a human’s greatest happiness, found precisely in union with God.) Since, then, that ‘first friend’ actually is what Socrates will claim that he and everyone else really desires, it seems doubly reasonable to suppose that it is what he is really talking about here – even if Lysis and Menexenus cannot see it, and cannot be expected to see it. Or, more immediately, Socrates is setting us up for the kind of answer he will want to give to the question he is about to put to Menexenus: ‘When *x* loves *y*, who is the friend (*philos/on*)? Is it *x*? Or *y*? Or both?’ The answer he will propose is that it is some quite particular *philoumenon*, some quite particular thing loved, that is to be acquired. This *philos* (or *philon*, neuter) is not *y* – the person who is our friend, or the new-born baby (212E–213A), or a horse or a dog that is dear to us – but another thing: the ‘first friend’.

This further thing is also what is hinted at in Socrates’ question in 213C7–8, ‘Shall we say that besides these [sc. those loving, those loved, those

to the good of the agent in Chapter 2, §3 above). This Nygren contrasts with the notion he finds in (parts of) the New Testament that God’s love for humans – which if anything favours sinners over those who do God’s work here below – is absolutely ‘motiveless’. (God has no reason for loving us. He just loves us. So our love for our neighbour should come from the same source. True, St Paul admits that this is impossible for us. But that difficulty is avoided, thanks to St Paul’s further – and extraordinary – suggestion that it is ‘Christ in me’ that loves others in the motiveless way required by Christian *agapē*.) See further the concluding paragraphs in Chapter 12 below.

Returning to the *Symposium*, and the *Lysis*: in both dialogues we find the desire to acquire a friend (*philon*) or something I am in love with (*erōmenon*) turning out to be a desire to acquire the real good (not the *apparent* good: more on this in Chapter 10, §§2, 4 below); or, more exactly, turning out to be a desire to acquire for myself what the truth about the real good picks out, in my particular case, as the best thing for me to acquire now. Hence it appears that perhaps even *philia*, being acquisitive, is also egocentric. Though this may look like a serious difficulty for our interpretation, we shall defend that interpretation both on exegetical and on philosophical grounds.

We shall return to the philosophical issues in Chapter 12. Here we have given only the barest of sketches of the position we believe the *Lysis* to be advancing, to avoid further tantalizing the reader with talk about the ‘mysteries’ of the ‘first friend’. The particular issue raised in the present note, above, is whether the miracle of ‘motiveless’ love is a necessary or even desirable account of love. Nygren chides Augustine for strands of his thought in which he identifies that desire for union with a desire for the highest happiness open to humans. Even *that* degree of self-interest is, for Nygren, anathema. We are far from convinced that Nygren’s odd view (if orthodox within Protestantism) – which we do not doubt represents one strand in the thought of each of Paul, Augustine and Luther – is a correct view of love. (Nygren’s deliberately confrontational expression ‘acquisitive love’ of course gives the impression that when one’s children are spoken of as possessions, one thinks of them as one might think of a BMW or a sound system. This idea of how Socrates supposes parents think of their children is echoed in Vlastos’ treatment of the discussion with Lysis – a treatment we contest both in Chapter 2 above and in Chapter 10 below. But there is surely no such idea of acquisitions or possessions (*κτήματα*) present in the paternal concern of Melesias and Lysimachus for their sons as the greatest of their possessions in the *Laches* (for the sons as possessions, see 185A5, 187D3–4).)

loving and loved], there are still others of some sort that become friends to each other?’ Menexenus does not, perhaps, quite say ‘No’ to this (‘I don’t – Zeus! . . . I don’t see any way out at all’), but comes close enough; he is not in a position to say what else there could be ‘besides these’. By contrast, when Socrates picks up on Menexenus’ bafflement to ask ‘Is it perhaps, Menexenus, . . . that we weren’t inquiring in the right way at all?’, Lysis blurts out his disagreement. It was Lysis’ sudden intervention here that led us (Penner and Rowe) to wonder whether Lysis doesn’t in fact have some inkling of what Socrates might be about, for which the question in 213C7–8 acts as a cue. What about *knowledge* (so one might imagine him asking himself): Socrates was making so much of it then when he was talking to me, so why hasn’t it been mentioned now? (Socrates remarks on how attentive a listener Lysis is: 213D3–5.) What about if – so Lysis’ thought might continue – we tried introducing that into the equation?²⁹ (And, we add, if Lysis is wondering like this, he is very much on the right lines: knowledge, or the knowledgeable life, *is* what is truly *philon*, the ‘first friend’³⁰ – though in suggesting this we are aware that we are leaping far ahead of Plato’s/Socrates’ own exposition.) It is at any rate indisputable that Socrates has previously *told* Lysis about how to get friends (a whole lot of them): by becoming wise. Even if we, the readers, may not take that at face value, we have no reason to suppose that Lysis has, quite, seen through it, and it would be more than excusable if he were to suppose that there was, somehow, a connection between 213C and 210D (i.e. between the present context, and the way Socrates’ refutation of him turned out: in both cases, after all, the issue is about *becoming friends*). And indeed readers might also reasonably react in the same way; they ought certainly to be encouraged in doing so by the clear signs that we identified earlier of an intended continuity between that initial discussion between Socrates and Lysis and the Menexenus discussion. Like Lysis, though, any reader who has not been reading ahead will yet be in the dark about what the precise connection is.

(c) THE ARGUMENT (212A8–213C8)

The question with which Socrates opens generally fits the scenario he has just set up, but still hardly looks like the most obvious question to ask: ‘when someone loves a person, which of the two is it that becomes a friend –

²⁹ Menexenus, of course, was absent when Socrates was talking to Lysis, and knows nothing of what transpired then. (See Chapter 2 above, §1(c): Lysis seems to remain permanently ahead of Menexenus. But we are not given any reason to think that this is because of any particular failing on Menexenus’ part; it may *just* be because he happened to be absent for that first discussion with Lysis.)

³⁰ For this, see esp. n. 28 above.

the one who loves, of the one who is loved, or the one who is loved of the one who loves? Or does it make no difference? (212A8–B2). Why the restriction to the case of one person's loving another (what about reciprocal loving?)? And why the worry about which of them 'becomes a friend'? Isn't it obvious that the former is 'a friend' (*philos*) because he loves (what we may call the 'subjective' use of *philos*), while the latter is a friend because loved (the 'objective' use)? Fine, so Socrates seems to allow Menexenus that option, but why raise the question in the first place? Is he already, perhaps, trying to bamboozle the unfortunate adolescent?

That option we completely reject, for reasons that will quickly become apparent (briefly, Menexenus shows himself perfectly capable of handling the distinction between 'subjective' and 'objective' uses of *philos*). So far from trying to bamboozle anyone, Socrates is raising a question that matters to *him*, Socrates.³¹ There is something he suggests he isn't seeing – at any rate about the usual ways of thinking about friendship: cf. our reference to (what might be thought) 'obvious' in the preceding paragraph.³²

Why are we so certain that Socrates is not trying to put one over on Menexenus? Here is why. Menexenus in fact goes for the third of the three alternatives he has been offered:

'It seems to me,' he said, 'that it makes no difference.'

'What do you mean?' I said. 'Do both, then, become friends (*philoī*) of each other, if just one of them loves the other?'

'It seems so to me,' he said. (212B2–5)

So: it is Menexenus' view, as he states it here, that it is enough, *in any case whatever*, for one or the other of *x* and *y* to love the other for both to be friends (as Socrates puts it explicitly at D2, referring back to 212B2–5). This is spelled out in the following lines:

'What about this: isn't it possible for someone who loves (*philein*) not to be loved in return (*antiphileishai*) by this person that he loves?'

'It is.' 'And what about this: is it possible even to be hated (*miseishai*) when one loves?' (212B5–7)

³¹ It remains, as always, a possibility that *Socrates*, and Plato, are simply themselves confused, and unable to see things that they should have seen. But, as before, we propose to resort to that kind of explanation only if there is nowhere else to go (and as a matter of fact we shall make no resort to it anywhere in our analysis, either of the present argument or of any other in the *Lysis*).

³² It might be thought that Socrates himself is ignorant and in the dark here. More likely than this, we (Penner and Rowe) think, is that we have here the kind of question one gets from an analytical philosopher when he or she says 'There's something I don't understand about your position here': instead of merely confessing incomprehension, the philosopher will actually be raising an objection – an objection which sometimes even leads to a positive alternative of his or her own. It is our hope that, by the end of our treatment of the *Lysis*, it will seem to the reader too that Socrates has a plan of action all along for where his questions will lead.

That is, the thesis now under investigation is that

1. In every case whatever in which x loves y – whether y loves x or not, or whether y even hates x – both of x and y are friends.

Now if Menexenus sticks with this story, then in *every* such case x is a friend in the supposed subjective sense, and y is a friend in the supposed objective sense – even for cases when y doesn't love, or even hates, x , which in 212c2–d3 will apparently turn out to be what causes Menexenus to go back on his claim that 'it makes no difference'. So, contrary to any interpretation that supposes Socrates to be confusing Menexenus about the two different supposed senses of *philon* ('subjective' and 'objective'), or to be confused about them himself,³³ these in fact have nothing whatever to do with the actual argument Socrates is giving. The distinction would be perfectly irrelevant to that argument. It is surely gratuitous to read in a supposed fallacy of equivocation here.

Rather, we need to attend to the actual objection Socrates makes. This is that there is something wrong with Menexenus' *universal* account for the cases where the y does not love or even hates the x . Since we are looking for a universal account of who the friend is that will cover all cases in which x loves y , it must cover the cases in question – where x loves y , but y does not love x , and even hates x . The question is: what is it that Socrates is supposing will go wrong in such cases?³⁴ Whatever his reservations about these, the way must be left open – given what we have said so far – to a unitary (universal) account.

So what are Socrates' reservations and how are we to explain them? The interpreter is in some difficulty here. On the one hand, Menexenus – like any Athenian of his time – might well have accepted straight off that it is impossible to love someone who hates you. Menexenus might well ask: could it really be enough, for someone to be a friend, a *philos*, that *you* love *him*? Doesn't it matter who he is? If he doesn't love you, then he doesn't share your projects, doesn't have any concern for your happiness; if he hates you, then he'll actually be trying on every occasion to do you

³³ For an interpretation that resolutely attributes deep confusion to *Plato* about the 'senses' of *philon*, see Robinson 1986.

³⁴ The fact that Socrates is looking for a unitary account of what a friend is, that is, explanatory of all cases of love – notice the universal form of (1) above – will of course lead some interpreters to Wittgensteinian and Geachian railings about common qualities. These railings are, however, inspired by a view of the Socratic question as having to do with *meanings of words*, against which Penner has been inveighing since at least his 1973. See below, esp. Chapter 10, §2. The issue, we think, is not what we *mean* by a word like 'game', but what a game *is* – what a true account is of the nature of games (whatever we may *mean* by 'game').

down.³⁵ Socrates himself at 207D immediately connected loving a person with wishing that person to be happy, so presumably hating a person will mean *not* wanting them to be happy, or wanting them not to be happy. On what basis might Menexenus have granted such a thing? One way that is not implausible in the context of the dialogue as a whole is this: if, for example, he thought that

2. All friendship is for the sake of benefit to oneself.

The idea would be that if someone harms you, he cannot be a friend. Such an appeal to self-interest will hardly endear Menexenus to those who, like Vlastos, do not believe in friendship without a Kantian respect for persons. But it is surely a possible view we might attribute to a young man.

Is this a view Socrates might have been exploiting in the present context? We, Penner and Rowe, think the subsequent development of the dialogue shows that it is.³⁶ For, as we hope to show, what we find later on in the *Lysis* is a development of the thought in (2) from the vague thought that friendship is for the sake of benefit to a much more well-defined view of the nature of friendship and its relation to desire: a view on which the object of ‘friendship’ and desire is a *teleological* good, which is the aim not only of every action whatever, but of every emotion that is relevant to action. ‘Teleology’ is of course already brought in by the reference to benefit in (2). But the good in question will also be a *hierarchical* good. This is because, on the view Socrates will advance, particular actions are intrinsically means to a further end. Further ends may themselves be means to yet a further end. (I want to refuse this ice cream cone for the sake of sticking to my diet. I want to stick to my diet in order to be slimmer. I want to be slimmer as a means to attracting persons as possible life partners. I want to attract persons as possible life partners as a means to becoming happy. Happiness is then my teleological, hierarchical good, for which no further end needs to be specified.) So the way in which the vague (2) is developed in the sequel will get us something like this:

3. All friendship, like all intentional action, aims at a single ultimate good, namely happiness (along with whatever else may be universally a means to that happiness).

³⁵ One thinks immediately of what Polemarchus says in *Republic* 1 about what is owed by an enemy to an enemy –*kakon ti*, ‘something bad’ (332B).

³⁶ Compare the idea that will surface regularly later on, that one loves – and tries to acquire – what one needs for the benefit it brings, so that what is loved is what tends to benefit one: 214E5–215A3, 215A6–8, B3–6, 217A4–6, B3–4, 219A5, 220B6–D7, 222B7–C1. Our proposal is that, by the same token, to hate someone is – no doubt *inter alia* – to tend to harm that person. We derive this assumption from the claim, already made in 207D, that loving someone involves wanting them to be happy, and from the idea that loving and hating must be in some way opposites. (Hating will presumably be connected with harm to the person hating in the same way as, under (2), loving is connected with what benefits the person loving.)

(Clearly all of this requires much more exegesis and justification. The aim here is merely to explain Menexenus' acquiescence in the difficulty about being hated, or, perhaps better, Socrates' reliance on that acquiescence.)

This explanation should be obviously correct about cases where x is sufficiently aware that y will attempt to harm x . What if someone suggested it could still be the case that x loves y when x is sufficiently aware that y will attempt to harm x ? Our suggestion, which we will be able to make with more authority from the text of Plato in Chapter 11 below, is that it would be natural – given the teleological and hierarchical view of the object of love (and desire) suggested by (2) and (3) above – to suggest that in supposed cases of x loving y where y will attempt to harm x , there must be something else, z , which is what x actually loves in this situation, falsely believing y is a good means to z . (In Chapter 11, §7, we shall propose calling this a case of a 'false love' of y which is actually a mis-directed love of z .)

Leaving aside this case, one may still be troubled by the case where x is *not* sufficiently aware that y will attempt to harm x . The temptation to grant that this is a case of loving y is particularly strong, given the natural penchant we have for granting people first-person authority over what the objects are of their psychological states. But this view of first-person authority is already abandoned in the claims above in (2) and (3) – that all friendship is for the sake of benefit to oneself, and that all friendship aims at a single ultimate good, namely happiness. (For people surely often suppose that their love is *not* simply for their own benefit.) So we shall not take this consideration of first-person authority as a convincing objection. And indeed, here too, we might, on the basis of an explanation of the sort of (3), suppose that what x loves when unaware that y will attempt to harm x , is some third thing z – with x once more falsely believing that y is a means to z . By such means might this case too be dealt with.

At any rate, we shall not worry for the moment about these two cases, and so will go along with Socrates' suggestion that one will not love someone who will attempt to harm one. This will enable us to ask just how we are to exclude such cases as x loving y when y will attempt to harm x . One way would be to specify that y loves x as well as x 's loving y . Then the suggestion would be that '*neither* is *philos* – unless both love' (Socrates at 212c7–8). But that Socrates easily shoots down, again as a *general* account of the matter – we recall that Socrates seeks a universal explanation here of what love is – simply by pointing out that, if so, it won't be possible to love horses, or quails, or . . . , unless they love you back (212d5–8). But obviously there *are* horse-lovers . . . and wisdom-lovers (*philosophoi*) – Socrates

drops the last in as an apparent throwaway at 212D7–8. And what's more, there *are* people we love when they hate us: what about our infant children (212E7–213A3)?

This new stage of the argument suggests a solution to our other original problem about how Socrates sets things up in 212A–B, i.e. why he should restrict himself, as he does, to posing his question exclusively in terms of loving subject and loved object, without reference to reciprocal loving. That particular way of stating the problem is no doubt another reflection of what *we moderns* might ourselves have expected from a treatment of friendship. For moderns are interested in seeing how Socrates treats friendship *as moderns understand it*. This, one might be inclined to say, is not what Socrates is talking about or not all that he is talking about: see Chapter 2 above. But one must be careful here. Socrates *is* talking about the friendship that moderns want to talk about – unless moderns are under the illusion that the friendship they want to talk about is given by *what they mean by the word 'friendship'*, rather than about what friendship really is (regardless of what they put into the modern concept of friendship).³⁷ The fact is that what 212D5–8 – the passage that introduces love of horses, and so on – shows us is that the way Socrates frames his question ('when someone loves a person') is perfectly in order: what he is trying to do is to provide an account that will cover all examples of *x*'s loving *y*, including cases where reciprocity is actually ruled out by the nature of the object, i.e. because it is non-human, or even inanimate; or because, in the case of the infant, it isn't *yet* capable of loving (212E8).³⁸ He shows absolutely no interest in the general idea of reciprocity in the *Lysis*, except as something that crops up and immediately disappears in the course of a dialectical argument (i.e. here); reciprocal loving will just be a case where subject is also, coincidentally, object and object is coincidentally subject. But we should notice in any case that that first conversation with Lysis itself concerned solely the '*x* loves *y*' pattern, without introducing reciprocal love. If that part of the dialogue is as connected with the present one as we might hope in good or great dialogue-writing (and as Plato's writing gives us reason to think: see §(b) above), the concern with '*x* loves *y*' in the present exchange ought not to upset us unduly. (This point will be even more obvious once we come

³⁷ See Chapter 10, n. 23 on the real nature of justice as opposed to what David Sachs (or H. R. Prichard or John Rawls) may *mean* by justice.

³⁸ Socrates naturally put his question at 212A8–B2 in terms of loving *people*, because the question arose out of talk about friends of a human sort; but D5–8 rules out the possibility that the discussion is meant to be restricted to these. (Incidentally, the latter passage seems to work best if we assume that Socrates supposes it to be as unlikely that e.g. horses or dogs should love their owners as that wisdom would.)

to the treatment of the ultimate object of *philia*, the ‘first friend’. The first friend does not love back – though, as we shall also see, it is *oikeion*, ‘akin’, ‘belongs’, to everyone.)

Now for the next stage of the argument: if it is merely that *x* loves (‘loves’?) *y*, in the absence of any specification of what *y*’s attitude is towards *x*, then there is no inference to *x* or *y* being *philos* of the other; and building in reciprocity won’t work, because that would mean leaving out love of horses, etc. Or do people love horses, quails, dogs, wine, exercise, wisdom, only without their being ‘friends’, *phila* (212D8–E1)? Does the poet lie, when he talks of things like that, and children, who are actually put in first place in his list, as ‘friends’, *phila* (E1–4)? (And once again, the underlying thought may be, surely at least *something* ought to be *philon*, if there’s loving going on?) Menexenus’ view is rather that the poet is telling the truth. In which case, Socrates concludes, it’s what’s loved that’s *philon* and not the one loving it, whether the former loves or even hates the latter (E6–7), sc. if it isn’t going to be *both* that are *phila*.

Now that one might love a person who hates one seemed to have been ruled out by the text in the previous stage of the argument (212B–C); and in order not to restrict himself to cases of reciprocal loving (which is the chief point of 212D5–E6), it would in fact have been enough for Socrates just to say ‘[it’s what’s loved that’s *philon*] whether [the one loved] loves or *doesn’t love* [the one loving]’. But by our argument several paragraphs back, where we attributed to Menexenus – and Socrates – the view that all love is for benefit to oneself (= our (2) above), we still need to exclude cases where *y* hates *x* and will inevitably harm *x*. At the same time – as we might hold, and Socrates shows no obvious inclination to deny – in some cases we do love those who hate us, the most basic, and perhaps incontrovertible, case being that of our infant children. Or, if not incontrovertible, it would hardly seem plausible or persuasive to propose that we love horses or quails while denying that we love our babies – even when they hate us. So:

‘What’s loved, in that case, *is* a friend to the one loving, it appears, Menexenus, whether it loves him or, even, hates him; as for example with recently born children, in some respects not yet loving, in others even hating, when they are disciplined by their mother or by their father – nevertheless even when hating, at that moment they are most of all dearest of friends to their parents.’ (212E6–213A3)

Menexenus agrees.

From this argument (*ek toutou tou logou*, 213A4; i.e. from D5 on?), Socrates concludes, it will not be the one loving that’s *philos*, but the one loved; correspondingly it will be the one hated that’s *echthros*, an enemy (the

opposite of *philos*), not the one hating (213A4–6). So much is clear. But the counter-argument that we now face looks problematical. Here it is again:

‘Many, then, are loved by their enemies, and hated by their friends, and are friends to their enemies and enemies to their friends, if it’s what’s loved that’s a friend and not what loves. And yet it’s highly unreasonable, my dear friend, or rather, I think, it’s actually impossible, to be enemy to friend and friend to enemy.’

‘You appear, Socrates,’ he said, ‘to be saying the truth.’ (213A6–B5)

The problem with this is that, at least at first sight, it makes it look as if we are supposed to be convinced, or impressed – like some of the victims of experts in ‘eristics’ – merely by the odd sound of ‘enemy to friend’ and ‘friend to enemy’. If so, Plato should certainly have directed us, and Socrates, to a passage like the one at *Sophist* 259C7–D5 (a Visitor from Elea, the birthplace of Parmenides, is speaking: someone who knows a thing or two about decent argument):

‘... we should leave pointless things like this alone. Instead we should be able to follow what a person says and scrutinize it step by step. When he says that what’s different in some respect is the same in a certain way or that what’s the same is different in a certain way, we should understand just what he is saying, and the precise respect in which he is saying that the thing is the same or different. But when someone makes that which is the same appear different in just any old way, or vice versa, or when he makes what is large appear small, or something that’s similar appear dissimilar – well, if someone enjoys constantly trotting out contraries like that in discussion, that’s not true refutation ...’ (translation adapted from Nicholas P. White)

In short, if we are to take the whole Menexenus discussion with any degree of philosophical seriousness, there must be more to Socrates’ refutation here in *Lysis* 213A6–B5 than the mere oddity of the juxtaposition of ‘friend’ and ‘enemy’, *philos* and *echthros*. Given ordinary assumptions (see on 212B–C above), that might be enough to convince Menexenus, along with the extraordinarily emphatic nature of Socrates’ statement in B2–4³⁹ (‘And yet it’s highly unreasonable, my dear friend, or rather, I think, it’s actually impossible, to be enemy to friend and friend to enemy’).⁴⁰ But it should surely not be enough to convince anyone else, not least because it will

³⁹ Socrates gives the claim added stress by pausing to address Menexenus at this point (‘And yet it’s highly unreasonable, my dear friend, ...’), and in a distinctive way: *o phile bataire*, he says, putting the two words we have had for ‘friend’ together (the first as adjective).

⁴⁰ Does the slightly drawn-out nature of Menexenus’ response in B4–5 – ‘You appear, Socrates,’ he said, ‘to be saying the truth’ – followed by his (perhaps) ambiguous ‘Evidently’ (*phainetai*) in B6, signal some reluctance to accede to B2–5, despite everything? If so, all credit will be due to Menexenus for *not* being (wholly) carried away by any mere play on *echthros/philos/philos/echthros*, which Socrates – if our analysis is right – actually doesn’t need for his argument.

apparently rule out our loving our babies ‘at the moment when they hate us’ (213A2). Why should we agree to rule that out?

We propose, in any case, that this is hardly the moment for *us* to give up on Socrates, and to accuse him of using eristic tricks (even granted that he might be putting a degree of pressure on Menexenus in B2–4, the important question is whether or not he gets the boy to agree to something there is reason for his agreeing to, irrespective of whether he currently sees it). The key is to notice the obvious, and recognize the close resemblance of the shape of this new context to the one in 212B–C: 212B–C turns wholly, the present context partly, on the problem of loving someone who hates you. The ‘unreasonableness’ (*pollē alologia*, 213B2–3) or ‘impossibility’ (B3) Socrates is now identifying is the unreasonableness or impossibility of someone’s, *x*’s, loving someone else, *y*, who hates him (*x*); or more precisely, of *x*’s loving *y*, who hates him *and* of *y*’s hating *x*, who loves him (*y*): *both* are impossible. This is part of what 213A6–B5 adds, while – so we suggest – using the same basic argument as in 212B–C. Socrates has conceded that there is no problem with horses, quails, dogs, wine, exercise, wisdom, or even infant children: in such cases the loved object may be allowed to be a friend, *philon*. But we still can’t generalize from this to cases where *y* hates *x*; for it is actually *impossible* (the impossibility, implied before, is now made explicit) for *x* genuinely to love *y* in that kind of case, sc. because we love what brings us benefit, and those who hate us tend to harm us. But, equally, on the same basis it will be impossible for *y* to hate *x* if *x* loves *y*, although *y* may perfectly well think he hates *x* if he doesn’t know *x* loves him and will cause him no harm. So we won’t, can’t, love our enemies; but we can love our infant children. But that, of course, is not the main point of the argument, which is still to rule out the option that the friend, when *x* loves *y*, is *y*. No, says Socrates, that can’t be right; *x*’s loving *y* doesn’t make *y* a friend if *y* hates, and can cause harm to, *x*.⁴¹

“Well then, if this is impossible,⁴² what loves will be friend of what’s loved.” “Evidently.” “What hates, then, conversely, will be enemy of

⁴¹ So much for the poet’s – Solon’s – authority, appealed to and accepted by Menexenus in 212D8–E5. Of course Solon didn’t actually suggest, in the lines quoted there, that the title *philos* belonged exclusively to the object loved; but that won’t help him, if it can’t in fact belong to both object and subject either.

⁴² 213A–B, with 212B–C, is the part of the *Lysis* which we (Penner and Rowe) have found most difficult to handle, and the part about which we have talked together for longer than we did about any other. We take the fact that we have now finally and completely agreed on how the Menexenus discussion works to be some small sign that we have got it right. The fundamental point, on which we unqualifiedly insist, is that the discussion involves no trickery. If anyone can come up with a better idea of how it all works *on that assumption*, we shall be perfectly content; anyone who denies the assumption will, we think, have a harder job on his or her hands than merely understanding a few truncated lines of argument.

what's hated." "Necessarily" (213B5–7). But that, responds Socrates, will necessarily (B8 *anankaion*) give us the same result as before: we'll often then have something that is *philon* of what is not *philon* (because not loving back), or even of what is *echthron* (because hating), and similarly we'll have things that are *echthron* of what is not *echthron*, or even of what is *philon*; sc. and this is just as unacceptable as it was before, and for the same reasons. The reference back at this point ('we'll have necessarily to agree to the same things as we did in the previous cases', 213B8–C1) will be to the previous treatments of loving ('loving') those who hate us, in 212B–213B.

"So what are we going to do," I said, "if neither those who love are going to be friends, nor the ones who are loved, nor those who love and are loved? Shall we say that besides these, there are still others of some sort that become friends to each other?" "I don't – Zeus!" he said: "Socrates, I don't see any way out at all" (213C5–9). Here follows Socrates' suggestion, equally quickly endorsed by Lysis, that they may have been looking at things in entirely the wrong way. We have already indicated what we think is going on here (see §(b) above), and will return to that explanation in a moment (in §(d) below). We end the present section with a comment on the function of 212D8–213C5. This is the passage that excludes the possibilities that when someone loves (is claimed to love?) someone/something, it's just the person/thing loved that's *philos/on*, or just the one loving. That these alternatives should be noticed and dealt with is of course in line with the question Socrates started with at 212A8–B2, but that question, as we noticed, is itself scarcely an obvious one: why ever should anyone suppose in the first place that it was exclusively the one loving, or exclusively the one loved, that 'becomes a friend'? It will make perfect sense, however, for Socrates to start there, if his fundamental question is whether, when one person loves (or claims to love, thinks he loves?) another, there is *always* something that is *philon*. For clearly, in that case he must exclude not only the possibility that *x* and *y* are both 'friends', if *x* loves/thinks he loves *y*, but the possibility – however remote, indeed barely thinkable⁴³ – that either *x* or *y* is a 'friend' to the other without the other's being a 'friend' to him.

So: what *are* we going to do, 'if neither those who love are going to be friends, nor the ones who are loved, nor those who love and are loved? Shall

⁴³ 'Barely thinkable', that is, insofar as in any case where *x* really does love *y* (that is, even when *y* doesn't love *x*, but excluding the case where *y* hates *x*, and *y* is able to harm *x*), *x* will be *philos* in the way appropriate to a loving subject, *y* in the way appropriate to a loved object. And yet, in the end, Socrates' main emphasis will be on the *philon qua* thing loved – this especially in the part that leads up to the introduction of the 'first friend'; given that we do love, the question will be just *what* we love (which will, as it happens, be something that does not love us back).

we say that besides these, there are still others of some sort that become friends to each other?

(d) SOCrates, LYSIS, MENEXENUS: THREE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF UNDERSTANDING

Socrates and Menexenus have ended up not being able to make sense of ordinary assumptions about loving, which have it that it's enough, for there to be genuine *phila* around, for a person to love someone/something; so long as *x* loves *y*, both are 'friends'. The argument seems rather to leave us with the conclusion that *neither* are friends (because not both, not *x* by itself, and not *y* by itself). So 'shall we say that besides these, there are still others of some sort that become friends to each other?' (213c7–8). As we suggested earlier, to Menexenus that is likely to mean 'surely we can't'. But for Socrates it is a serious question: *isn't* there something else (implied answer: yes, there is)? The Menexenus discussion as a whole is preparing the way for that something else. For the fact is that the answer to the question, 'When *x* loves *y*, who is the friend? *x*? *y*? or both?' is, or will be: 'None of the above.' (At least none of the usual values of *y* will work here: of course if anyone were to have proposed the 'first friend' as a value of *y*, that suggestion would be right.) The scenario in which *y* hates *x*, whether or not *y* can actually harm *x*, shows that it cannot in general be the case that *y*, the thing said to be loved, is *philon*, friend, and will also be enough to rule out the other options (both, *x*). The *philon* which is the object of love can only be something that will benefit us, and not harm us. *This*, of course, is the basic hypothesis which we have claimed is the only thing that will ultimately give point to Socrates' denying that friend can be friend to enemy or enemy be enemy to friend. What he will get from the next discussion (with Lysis again: 213e1–216b9) is a decent candidate for the role of *philon*: the good, and from there he will gradually move towards what can be called the climactic argument of the *Lysis*, the one that gives us that good which is the first friend (219b5–220b5). The first friend is not the *y* of '*x* loves *y*'; rather, it is that for the sake of which every other *y* we may be tempted to say *x* loves is loved for the sake of (that 'good friend' – so we surmised – that Socrates said in 211d–e that he was so passionate to acquire). So now, perhaps, we may answer a question posed at the beginning of the present section: when exactly did Socrates and Menexenus 'turn' off the 'road' of the argument, as Socrates says they did: 'But let's not go along this way any longer – for the investigation appears to me one of a difficult

sort,⁴⁴ like a difficult road – but where we made the turning, that's where it seems to me we should go . . .' (213E3–5). They turned aside from the road when they left out *the good*; and that is precisely what the route they choose – or Socrates chooses – next, in 213EI–216B9, will lead to.

But all of this is still to come. It should be no surprise, then, that Socrates should ask, at the moment of apparent impasse, whether 'we weren't inquiring in the right way at all?' (213D1–2). They have just been trying to make sense of *philia* without a complete set of tools, landing themselves with a puzzle that can only be resolved by bringing in new resources.⁴⁵ But now Lysis claims to have seen independently that they've been going wrong ('I think [we weren't inquiring in the right way . . .]', 213D2). Not being a clairvoyant, he can't be supposed to have much of an inkling, yet, about the candidacy of the good for the role of friend, let alone about the 'first friend'. That, surely, is a fair inference from what we ourselves, as readers, can predict at this point; the odds are heavily against anyone's being able to see that far ahead (and so, as we – Penner and Rowe – would claim, being able to read the passage, first time round, fully as Plato intends it). So how is it that Lysis thinks Socrates and Menexenus have been going wrong? There are perhaps two possibilities. The first possibility is that he has seen that there's no way out given the assumptions they've been working on; he simply has faith in Socrates' ability to fix things, without seeing in any detail how they might be fixed. Or, the second possibility (the one we prefer, and the one already briefly suggested earlier), he thinks he has seen something fairly specific, as indeed the manner of his intervention at 213D2–3 may suggest. Given two things: (i) that it is something that Menexenus hasn't seen, and (ii) that the only things we have reason to suppose Lysis knows about and Menexenus doesn't will be in the first conversation between Lysis and Socrates (when Menexenus was absent), then what Lysis is seeing ought to be something he learned in that conversation. But the main lesson he learned there was about the importance, in the context of *philia*, of *knowledge* – and so we return to our suggestion, back in §(b) above, that Socrates' reference at 213C7–8 to 'others of some sort that become friends to each other' serves as a cue for Lysis: shouldn't knowledge be in and around here somewhere, he

⁴⁴ Socrates is presumably not here proposing to *shirk* something because it's difficult (how unphilosophical that would be); rather the road, and the investigation, is 'difficult' because it's difficult to get to the right destination that way.

⁴⁵ Hinted at, as we have proposed, by 213C7–8 ('Shall we say that besides these, there are still others of some sort that become friends to each other?').

asks himself (and quite right too)?⁴⁶ Meanwhile, Menexenus is just baffled, and says as much (213c9).

Such differences in levels of understanding – between Socrates, Lysis and Menexenus, and also between these three and Hippothales (only, it seems, interested in his love, not in a discussion of love)⁴⁷ – we have met before, and they will also play a crucial role later on in the *Lysis*. They are carefully manufactured by the author, and his creature Socrates,⁴⁸ and equally carefully signalled; we need perpetually to be aware that the same statements may need to be read simultaneously in different ways. But there is at the same time a clear *hierarchy* among these readings, insofar as they represent different degrees of understanding. If we are at the level of Lysis, rather than of Socrates, we shall be missing something, for Socrates is way ahead of Lysis; if at that of Menexenus, we shall miss rather more, because Lysis is seeing more than Menexenus.⁴⁹ And if we stay at the level of Hippothales, we shall, of course, miss virtually everything worth anything.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ For a long time Rowe was attracted by yet another reading of what Lysis thinks he has seen: that the impasse could be evaded merely by articulating the difference between what we have called the ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ uses of *philos*. At more than one point in the argument, as Socrates pursues his own agenda, the reader is likely to want to object ‘but yes, both *x* and *y* are *philoī*, only in different ways!’ – most obviously at 212c7–d1, for surely even if *y* hates *x*, who loves him, *y* is still *philoī*, because loved, and *x* because loving? So, all that is needed to get out of the impasse is to bring back a different version of the solution ‘both’. However (a) it would be a totally uninteresting way out, and (b) neither Socrates nor Menexenus shows the slightest sign of not understanding the distinction in question; indeed they take it for granted. If it is not introduced explicitly in 212c7–d1, even to be set to one side, that is because Socrates is after altogether bigger fish. (The question isn’t about what we *say* we love, or about linguistic usage at all; it is about *what* we love.)

⁴⁷ See his reaction to Socrates’ conclusion at 222a6–7 (Chapter 6 below).

⁴⁸ Or his ‘creation’ – but that might begin to suggest that Plato conjured up his Socrates from nowhere. We take no position here on the historicity of the Socrates of the *Lysis* (but see the exchange between Penner and Rowe 2002); in describing him as Plato’s ‘creature’ we do no more than advert to the fact that Socrates, as character, cannot but do what Plato wishes to have him do.

⁴⁹ On our account, the argument of ‘the Menexenus discussion’ is quite opaque to the unfortunate Menexenus, while Lysis sees at least *something* to it (about as much as he saw to the argument of 207b–210d). (For more on Socrates’ rejection of ‘a friend might love an enemy’, see ch. II, pp. 236–42 below.)

⁵⁰ There is a slight temptation to suppose yet another level of understanding, above even Socrates’: that of the controlling author, and so of the reader who can keep pace with him – because, after all, the creator (the playwright, the puppet-master) must in one way or another have more knowledge than is available to what he has created. We see no reason, however, to suppose that there is any distance between Plato and Socrates *philosophically*, or that Plato wants to dissociate himself from any part of what he has Socrates propose. The status of the reader most resembles that of a privileged spectator; insofar as the author prefers to remain invisible, he invites us simply to watch, and judge, the philosophical action.

CHAPTER 4

213DI–216B9: Socrates and Lysis again, then Menexenus – poets and cosmologists on what is friend of what (like of like; or opposite of opposite?)

[Preliminary note:

We found the part of the *Lysis* covered in this chapter, together with that covered in Chapter 3, the hardest in the whole dialogue. In the case of the material of the present chapter, our difficulties were increased by the cavalier treatment Socrates appears to hand out to the poets and the cosmologists whose views he is supposedly canvassing. The reader may well feel that Socrates is not in fact taking their views seriously at all, but rather using them as an excuse to drag in a bunch of claims he wants to discuss in any case: that the *y* in ‘*x* loves *y*’ can only be the good; that the *x* in ‘*x* loves *y*’ cannot be either the good or the bad, but is rather the neither-good-nor-bad; and that the object of love is a certain self-sufficient, teleological and hierarchical good that is the ultimate object of love for all desirers – all of whom stand in need of something, namely, that self-sufficient ultimate good. (It will turn out that the self-sufficiency involved is of a special, particular kind: a maximal, or practicable self-sufficiency. But that is to anticipate a specific issue that will bulk large in the present chapter.)

An obvious parallel the reader might adduce, for the whole style of the passage, is Socrates’ treatment of Simonides at *Protagoras* 338E6–347A5: the passage which – extraordinarily, one might say, even mischievously? – declares the poet to be saying the very (outlandish) things that Socrates himself wants to say. We ourselves think the comparison would be apt. In both dialogues, the sense that Socrates is toying with the poets is palpable. He is having fun at their expense, while he wickedly exploits his own extraordinary intellectual sure-footedness to run rings around what the poets think they are saying by means of their words. So much we grant. What we do not grant is that all this is mere playing around – either in *Protagoras* or here, in the discussion of the poets and cosmologists, in the *Lysis*. The question is: what is it that Simonides intends to speak of when he talks about virtue and acting willingly; and what is it that the poets intend to speak of when they talk as they do – about *x* loving *y*, about likes,

about the good and the bad? If what Simonides and the others intend to talk about is virtue, acting willingly, loving, likes, the good and the bad as they are in this world, and not as they are in some dream world of their own that corresponds to their own (probably mistaken) ideas of what those things are, then it is perfectly in order for Socrates to bring into the discussion the truths that he wants to discuss. So we do not for a moment deny that there is, also, an element of mischievousness, or the ‘cavalier’, in both contexts; nor do we deny that, taken *au pied de la lettre*, there are decided and unexplained gaps left in these parts of the overall argument Socrates is making in these two dialogues. It is obvious that there are such gaps in the *jeu d'esprit* that Socrates conducts in the discussion of Simonides in the *Protagoras*. Even so, we claim, no serious gap that is left in the argument remains unaddressed elsewhere in that dialogue – if there is the slightest need of the relevant conclusions for the rest of what Socrates wants to say. (For example, ‘no one errs willingly’ is arguably quite adequately aired in the famous discussion of pleasure and the measuring art towards the end of the *Protagoras*.) The same is true, we shall claim, for the treatment of ‘like loves like’ in this part of the *Lysis*. That is, the gaps in the argumentation against the poets and the cosmologists that we will expose in the running commentary in this chapter will be made good in later parts of the dialogue.

We hope that this much by way of warning will help prevent the reader from supposing that because Socrates does not always speak to what the poets and cosmologists think they are saying, this represents any serious damage to his argument in the dialogue as a whole. The sins of argumentation found in this part of the dialogue prove venial, we suggest, when located within the fuller argumentation later in the dialogue.]

I A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE NEW DISCUSSION ('THE POETS AND THE COSMOLOGISTS')

If the account offered in the preceding chapter as to why the Menexenus discussion fails is correct – that in ‘*x* loves *y*’, we need the *y* to be something other than the person loved – the question arises about what it is that we need the *y* to be. The discussion of the poets and the cosmologists that now ensues, ironically disguised as an examination of the views of the wise, examines two dicta, ‘like loves like’ and ‘opposite loves opposite’, for illumination. It examines these two dicta, however, for just two kinds of likes and two kinds of opposites: the good and the bad. Of the resulting four possibilities, the possibility that the bad might love the bad is ruled out:

this through Socrates' making explicit some considerations we have already appealed to in our account of why, in the Menexenus discussion, Socrates sees a difficulty in the idea of *x*'s loving *y* in certain cases where *y* hates *x*. These considerations involve a strong connection between being bad, harming, and hatred that we drew, in Chapter 3, precisely from the present discussion of the poets and the cosmologists. (This connection is parallel to a similarly strong connection, present throughout the *Lysis*, between being good, benefiting – which is the same as being useful to: cf. n. 37 below – and love.) Once these considerations involving the bad are explicit, it will be sufficiently clear that we can rule out not only the bad loving the bad but also the good loving the bad. ('Why would anyone love what will harm him?' Socrates would be likely to ask. But we admit that we require here too the assumptions we made in Chapter 3 – that if the end to which this action is a means is bad, then whether or not we know it, we do not desire either the end or the means.) We, Penner and Rowe, admit in note 43 below that the third possibility – that of the bad loving the good – is not dealt with at any point during the present passage on the poets and cosmologists. Nevertheless, we argue that later, at 220D5–6 with 217E7–9, this possibility is implicitly rejected – and for good reason: that the class of those who are bad, i.e. completely bad (by Socrates' lights: more on this below), and not just neither good nor bad, is empty. This, we shall suggest, makes the defect in the present passage a venial one when we look at the project of the *Lysis* as a whole. Hence, if we set this third possibility (bad loves good) aside on the grounds that it is dealt with later, we are left with the good loving the good as the only remaining possible case of love construed in terms of just the two attributes, good and bad.

This fourth possible case brings the interpreter to what we regard as the thorniest part of Socrates' argumentation in the present section. We have found it necessary to step very carefully indeed through the difficulties that his discussion of the poets and cosmologists can pose here. At each step in the argument, a first reading is likely to throw up a number of alternative hypotheses as to what Socrates has in mind, yielding a cumulative and bewildering variety of exegetical alternatives for the passage as a whole. The result may be that the reader comes to feel left without a clue as to what is going on in the passage – either that, or else he or she will arrive at a premature diagnosis of multiple silly confusions on Socrates' part, a reaction that never seemed attractive to us, and has come to seem to us increasingly unattractive. Nevertheless, we ourselves made so many mis-steps in reading this passage that we often despaired of getting a simple, clear, non-foolish – and so credible – reading. Since, however, we have finally come to a view of

Socrates' argumentative strategy that we think is adequate, we have decided that before returning to our running commentary, it might be helpful for us first to give a brief sketch of our own overall view of the passage – at least to give readers one picture of what a simple, clear interpretation might look like that does not at the same time make Socrates' argument look just foolishly defective. We hope that then our detailed exploration of the problematic of the passage, when it comes, will not seem to have too much of the look of quibbling on the road to nowhere. We also hope it will have the desirable side-effect of making it easier for others who accept the challenge to undertake to dissent from our interpretation.

There are in fact two arguments in the discussion of 'like loves like' restricted to the good: first, an argument which is based upon the idea that one thing cannot love a thing that is like itself, since – even if the first of the likes badly needs something – there is no benefit the first can get from the second that it cannot get from itself (214E2–215A4). Then there is a second argument making the same point about the good loving the good, but on the astonishing further grounds that the good are in any case self-sufficient, and so couldn't need any benefit from any other being (215A4–C2). We take the first argument to be, by itself, unproblematic if interpreted simply as a refutation of the claim that what is like in all respects loves what is like in all respects. It will not refute the claim that what is like in some respects loves what is like in some respects. For in the case of two beings that are likes in most respects, but differ in external circumstances – one being rich, for example, and the other poor – there might be benefit one could give the other; so, for example, the poor person who is in other respects like the rich person might still love the rich one. However if we assume that Socrates needs only to show that what is like in all respects never loves what is like in all respects, there is no problem with his argument here. On this assumption, the defeat of the poets and cosmologists would be complete. It seems to us entirely possible that this is all Socrates would have been thinking of in this part of the argument.

Nevertheless, at a later stage of the argument (216E), where the rejection of 'like loves like' will be employed to rule out 'the neither good nor bad loves the neither good nor bad', it will seem much less plausible to argue that Socrates is only thinking of things that are exactly alike. (Why shouldn't two beings that have the attribute of being neither good nor bad be alike in having that attribute, but not in the qualities that makes them good to the extent that they are good, or bad to the extent that they are bad? Why shouldn't they differ in the degree to which they fall short of the good? And then why shouldn't they differ in their external circumstances

as well?) This would everywhere undercut the suggestion that Socrates is only concerned with things that are exactly alike when he speaks of ‘like loves like’. The resulting gaps in the argument, in the discussion of the poets and cosmologists and at 216E, will not be filled within these passages themselves. To be more precise, we will not be able, *from the passages alone*, to show that in no case will the object of love be the neither good nor bad, nor will we be able to show that in no case will the being who loves be good. And these are precisely the conclusions Socrates will eventually need out of the discussion of ‘like loves like’. Nevertheless, they *will*, ultimately, be justified.

The gap in the second argument, i.e. in 214E–216B, is more serious. By what possible argument could it be established that the good are self-sufficient? Is it not the case that there are good people? And if there are good people, has not Aristotle made it clear once and for all that the virtuous are not, merely by being virtuous, self-sufficient, through his observation that no one would call happy the person suffering the worst misfortunes (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1.9, 1100a4–9: let us say, the person being tortured on the rack; cf. also *Gorgias* 473b–c)? That is, on the assumption that there are good people, Socrates’ argument commits him to something blatantly false. Here too we believe the mistake, if there is one, is venial. For Socrates will also argue (or at any rate strongly imply) later on, at 218A2–B5 with 217E6–8 and 220D4–6, that there are no good people (see Chapter 5 below, esp. n. 61). However, this may well seem a scholastic way out of the difficulty, since the argument leaves the distinct feeling that Socrates is saying that if there were any good people in the world, they would be self-sufficient.¹ Either that, or at any rate (now that we look at the text more carefully) the argument gives the feeling that the good ‘to the extent that they are good’ (215A3–7) will be self-sufficient. We shall certainly need in any case to explain this strange phrase ‘to the extent that they are good’, if we are not to leave the reader in the lurch. For by any account of a good person, whether as (a) someone who is morally good; as (b) someone who has Aristotelian virtue; as (c) someone who has Socratic wisdom; or (d) by means of any account in terms of being good of one’s kind, there does not seem to be any way to take this as bringing self-sufficiency with it. So the question remains: what on earth does Socrates have in mind in allowing

¹ Cf. the view of the *Meno* held by some scholars (e.g. Penner 1988), that it is Socrates’ view in that dialogue that virtue *is* teachable, because it is knowledge, even though, paradoxically, there are no teachers – given that no one has the knowledge in question, since Socrates doesn’t, and he is the wisest person there is. (We add here that, in our opinion, the idea of ideal attributes – attributes that nothing has – does not really require reference to counterfactuals.)

the feeling to linger with us that he is claiming something that is just plain false? We shall have something to say in answer to this question – based upon a difference we see (very much to the credit of Socrates and not to the credit of modern philosophy) between how Socrates thinks of things being good of their kind and the way moderns think of them – in Chapter II below.

In the meantime, we shall suggest a different way out of the difficulty that we face within this passage – by exploiting that strange turn of phrase Socrates uses when he proposes to consider the good ‘to the extent that they are good’ (instead of ‘to the extent that they are like each other’). If the present, second, argument is to work even on the assumption made in the first argument, that the likes in question are exactly alike – alike in all respects, even external circumstances – we shall need to take the contrast between ‘to the extent that they are good’ and ‘to the extent that they are like’ in a particular way.

We may approach the point in a series of gentle steps. The first argument was about ‘like loves like’. We have seen that this conclusion – ‘like loves like’ – would be refuted if we assume that Socrates is concerned solely with likes that are exactly alike, even in their external circumstances. If, similarly, we take the second argument to be about what is in every respect like, but also good, loving what is in every respect like, but also good, then we can consider this case on the basis not just of the ‘like loves like’ argument (which does get us the result we need), but on the basis of a further consideration. The idea is that the refutation of ‘good loves good’ will be even firmer than the refutation of ‘like loves like in every case’ – based on a consideration not applicable to things that are merely like in all respects. How so?

To explain this, we need to spell out the claim just stated in terms of likes that are also good in a way which brings out the contrast at 215a5–6, 8, between ‘to the extent that they are like’ and ‘to the extent that they are good’. Let us begin by contrasting the following two fuller formulae:

L The likes that are also good, to the extent that they are likes, love likes that are also good (to the extent that they are likes);

and

G The likes that are also good, to the extent that they are good, love likes that are also good (to the extent that they are good).

We spell out the idea of the contrast here like this: there are two ways to argue against ‘likes that are good love likes that are good’, one by way of the fact that the one loving and the one loved are likes, the other by way of the fact that the one loving and the one loved are good (sc. as well as

like in every respect).² The first way of arguing, as we have already noted, gets rid of the relation of loving even for likes that are not good; but *a fortiori* it rules out loving for likes that are good as a special case. But the second way of arguing asks whether there is a stronger way of achieving the same result that works only for those likes that are good. Well, what is true about likes that are good? Certainly, being good, they don't need anything more by way of goodness. So with respect to goodness, they are self-sufficient. (Those likes that are not good do need goodness – which is why they are not self-sufficient even with respect to goodness.) Socrates does not here go into why Menexenus should believe that those who are not good need goodness. But the initial conversation with Lysis, back in 207D–210D, should make it clear enough why Socrates thinks goodness, i.e. wisdom, is needed. Since the good person who loves is already good, the other good person won't be able to supply any needs at all in the area of goodness.

Very well, but may not the good person who loves need something else? May it not be the case, as with Aristotle's virtuous man on the rack, that the good person who loves is in need of some things from external circumstances? Perhaps. But, even so, the other being who is both (exactly) like and good will not be able to help with respect to external circumstances – so much we have from the argument by way of likeness in all respects. This drives us to ask 'What if both beings, which are both good and like, are landed in external circumstances that are (exactly) alike? May it not be the case that the circumstances produce a need in both of them?' (Suppose that the two of them are being tortured on adjacent racks.) Our solution here takes a hint from Aristotle's insistence that the virtuous person, even on the rack, will at least do no worse than the non-virtuous person in the same situation: see e.g. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.8–11, especially 1099a31–b8, 1100a5–9, 1100a32–b11. This we take to say that in the same external circumstances, the virtuous man is happier than the non-virtuous man – that is, the virtuous man is happier than the non-virtuous man *external circumstances aside*.

It seems to be a plus – one insisted on by Rowe from early on – for this solution of ours that it explains why in a later passage (218A–B) the self-sufficiency that stops gods and (any) wise people (there may be) from

² We remind the reader that we are still treating 'likes that are good love likes that are good' on the assumption that the likes in question are exactly alike (alike even in external circumstances). Our problems with self-sufficiency are serious enough without bringing up those cases where the likes are exactly alike only in their goodness, and not, for example, in their external circumstances. We introduce this further level of difficulty later, in §4 below, and esp. in our discussion of the neither good nor bad loving the neither good nor bad, in our treatment, in Chapter 5 below, of 216E.

desiring the good, or at any rate the good under discussion in that passage, is self-sufficiency in wisdom. This is precisely once more a species of self-sufficiency, *external circumstances* – including luck – *aside*. For we could equally have two wise men being tortured on adjacent racks. We shall offer further confirmation (based on the identification in the *Euthydemus* of wisdom with, of all things, good luck: see the end of the present chapter) for the hypothesis that the Socratic method of argument seems prefaced by an unstated ‘considerations of luck and external circumstances aside . . .’. To put the idea in another way, what we are representing Socrates as doing is considering self-sufficiency in a context where the external circumstances from which one begins are treated as irrelevant to the point he is going for. (We encountered a similar scenario in Chapter 2, when Socrates was pursuing with Lysis the question of turning one’s affairs over to relevant experts without reference to the question of whether the relevant experts are to be trusted – because it had no bearing on the point.)

This said, we freely admit that our proposal commits us to the view that when Socrates talks about self-sufficiency, he is not talking about self-sufficiency *sans phrase*, but of what we shall dub ‘practicable self-sufficiency’, i.e. the maximum of self-sufficiency, given the external circumstances from which you start (given the hand life has dealt you, given your luck). In case this too may seem scholastic,³ we add at once that it is a scholasticism that we are prepared to defend stoutly. There will be more on practicable self-sufficiency later, especially in §§4 and 5 below.

We will not take up here the further problems we shall run into if Socrates, for his larger purposes in the *Lysis*, needs to deal also with cases of likes loving likes where it is enough for two beings to be alike that they be alike merely in being good or in possessing the attribute of being neither good nor bad (n. 2 above). Our aim in this section was merely to prepare the reader for the gaps in Socrates’ argument that will emerge in our running commentary on the discussion of the poets and the cosmologists – gaps that, in a running commentary, might otherwise seem overwhelmingly baffling. They certainly baffled us for a while.

We offer no more here by way of signposts, and return to our running commentary.

Socrates’ seemingly despairing question at 213c5–7 (what then are we to do . . . when all the available alternatives [all the available alternative answers

³ See above, text to n. 1.

to the question, ‘When *x* loves *y*, who is the *philon*, *x*, or *y*, or both?’] have failed?), and Menexenus’ response (‘I don’t see any way out at all,’ c9) are followed by a clear break: they have themselves failed in the inquiry, and must look for help from elsewhere – as it happens, from the poets, and cosmologists. Their ‘failure’, as we have suggested, is not quite what it seems; but Socrates is not yet ready to break cover, as it were, and continues on the surface to go along with Menexenus’ perspective on things. So: they’ve failed; can anyone else help? More apparent failure will follow, as the theses got from the new outside sources (like loves like; unlike/opposite loves unlike/opposite) fall to pieces in Socrates’ and Lysis’ hands. However from the ruins of the theses in question emerge some clear and positive results, marked by the new and overtly positive tone that Socrates will adopt in 216C, now for once advancing a thesis almost as being of his own – albeit still dressed up as coming from outside: he now becomes a seer, ‘divining’ what might be the case. Thus the new discussion, i.e. in 213D–216B, and the previous one in 212A–213D operate in a similar way: designed to look as if they eliminate all candidates (212A–213D), or at least highly promising ones (213D–216D), for the role of *to philon*, ‘the friend’, they are in fact clearing the path for a candidate as yet formally to be declared.⁴

But this is still some way off. We must return to the plot where we left it, with the (apparent) failure of the preceding discussion between Socrates and Menexenus, and Lysis’ promising intervention. We begin with a translation of this short transitional passage, most of which we gave in the [last section](#), but which now appears with a few explanatory notes and other features:

213DI ‘Is it perhaps, Menexenus,’ I said, ‘that we weren’t inquiring (*zētein*) in the right way at all?’

‘I think so, Socrates,’ said Lysis, and blushed as he said it;⁵ for it seemed to me that the words escaped without his wanting them to (*akōnti*), because of the

⁴ What is this candidate for the *philon* that is yet to be formally declared? Two possible, verbally different, answers could be given. One answer is that it is the candidate portended by the Menexenus discussion: a particular value of *y* in ‘*x* loves *y*’, namely that ultimate good which Socrates will later call the ‘first friend’. The other answer is that *to philon* is to be identified with the entire complex consisting of subject (always, as Socrates will go on to argue, *neither good nor bad*), the ultimate good as object, and the relation of *philia* between them – an identification that is explicit at 216C2–3. We propose that one should be happy to offer both kinds of answers: these are the kinds of elasticities of expression that we need, in general, to be prepared for when Plato has Socrates ask questions of the sort ‘what is *to philon*?’ As we should put it, Socrates is asking about the reference of *to philon*, not just for some one meaning of the term. Thus to say ‘what *to philon* is = the ultimate good’ does not exclude our saying also ‘what *to philon* is = the ultimate good loved by the *neither good nor bad*’.

⁵ Lysis blushes for having spoken up, whereas Hippothales blushed instead of speaking up at 204B–C; is there any significance in the contrast (a question asked of us by M. M. McCabe; we pass it on, without having any answer to offer)?

intensity with which he was paying attention 2I3D5 to what was being said, and it was clear that it was the same, too, all the while he was listening.

So, because I wished to give Menexenus a breather, and also felt delight at the other's⁶ love for wisdom (*philosophia*), I changed things round, turning the discussion 2I3E1 in *Lysis'* direction. I said:

'Lysis, what you're saying seems true to me, that if we were investigating (*skopein*) in the right way, we'd never be lost ['be wandering': *eplanōmetha*] in the way we are now. But let's not go along this way any longer – for the investigation appears to me one of a difficult sort, like a difficult road – but 2I3E5 where we made the turning, that's where it seems to me we should go, [sc. this time?] investigating (*skopein*) the things⁷ 2I4A1 the poets tell us; for these we regard as being as it were fathers of wisdom, and leaders [sc. in that respect].' (2I3DI–2I4A2)

Most of what needs to be said about this passage has been said in the last chapter, but a couple of small comments may usefully be added:

- (1) Presumably the somewhat generous way in which Socrates picks up Lysis' intervention ('Lysis, what you're saying seems true to me . . .') is designed to cover his embarrassment and put him at his ease; if we are right in our view of what Lysis has seen,⁸ what Socrates says he has seen – that a wrong turning has been taken by their omitting to consider knowledge – is not something on which Lysis has a full grasp. Yet by Socrates' criteria (cf. also – e.g. – Chapter 1, n. 16), Lysis has some sort of purchase on what is at issue.
- (2) The passage (2I3DI–2I4A2) represents a rather elaborate transition from one, apparently failed, discussion to a new one. Why so elaborate? The essential point Socrates makes is about why the Menexenus discussion led to failure: the approach it used was wrong. 2I3E1–5, by the way it dwells on this point, is the clearest possible indication of its importance – further confirmation that something significant was going on, and not mere eristical play.⁹

⁶ The Greek has *ekeinou* ('that one's'), which just possibly might refer to Menexenus; but the following *hoūtō* probably supports the case for taking the two participles as causal, and Socrates' being impressed by the *philosophia* of Menexenus wouldn't be an obvious reason for his changing over to Lysis.

⁷ Retaining *ta* in E5 (bracketed by Burnet, following Heindorf) – and reading *skopountas*, after Schleiermacher, for *skopounta*.

⁸ See Chapter 3, §§b, d above.

⁹ At this point in an earlier draft of Chapter 4, a reader raised two questions. (a) Our analysis of the text finds significance in even the minutest detail: can we be so certain that such minute analysis is appropriate to a Platonic dialogue? (b) If our analysis is even half right, then the *Lysis* is a text that requires multiple, even endless, re-reading: why would *any* author write in a way that demanded so much of the reader? (What would be the point?) In response to (a), we assert simply that our experience with the *Lysis* is that however closely one examines its texture, not only does the weave remain true but the closer and more coherent a fabric it appears to be; further reading always discovers new continuities, and never discontinuities. On (b), we respond more briefly still: it hardly seems an

3 214A2–B2

So what do the poets – actually Homer, in the first instance – say ‘about *philoī*, who they really are’ (214A3)? (We need here to recall the principal question of the Menexenus discussion: ‘when *x* loves *y*, which is the *philos* – or *philon* – of which? *x* (of *y*) ? or *y* (of *x*)? or both?’ To which we have now to add, as we put it: ‘. . . or none of the above?’)

‘And they [the poets] do have something to say about who really are *philoī*, and the view they express isn’t, I imagine [*dépou?*], a bad one (*legousi . . . ou phaūlōs apophainomenoi*¹⁰); but they do claim that it’s god himself¹¹ that makes them friends (*philoī*), by bringing them to each other. 214A5 They put it, I think, something like this: “Ever god brings like to like,” 214B1 and makes him known [sc. to his like] – or have you not encountered these verses?’

‘Yes, I have,’ [Lysis] said.¹² (214A2–B2).

So all that the gods have to do is to bring likes together, and as it were introduce them; likeness will do the rest, and make them friends. Likeness, then, will be the real cause. A reference to prose-writers serves to support the idea:

‘So haven’t you also encountered the prose-writings of the wisest people (*tois tōn sophōtatiōn sungrammasin*) saying these very same things, that like is necessarily always friend to like? These people, I think (*pou*), are the ones who 214B5 converse (*dialogesthai*) and write about the nature of the universe.’¹³

‘What you say is true,’ Lysis said. (214B2–6)

objection to an interpretation, especially of a literary-philosophical work, that it makes the work too complex. The *Lysis* just is a complex text, no doubt intended for close reading and study; perhaps it was even – among other things? – some kind of school text (i.e. within the Academy: we shall say a little more about this suggestion in the Epilogue below). What is certain is that 211A9–B2 shows (as do many other passages in the dialogues) that Socrates expects his interlocutors to remember the course of discussion rather well – and in close to verbatim detail. For more illustration on the use of detail, see esp. Chapter 1 above, on the opening scene of the dialogue, and our reprise of that scene in Chapter 9 below.

¹⁰ The adverb *phaūlōs* is cognate with the adjective *phaūlos* that Socrates used of Miccus (who was not *phaūlos*: ‘no mean person’, presumably in terms of expertise: 204A6), and of himself (who was, mostly – because he was ‘useless’: 204B8).

¹¹ Not any specific god; just a god, or the gods.

¹² Something very close to the hexameter line cited appears in Homer’s *Odyssey* (xvii.218), where Melanthius uses it to insult Eumeus and Odysseus: a case, Melanthius/Homer says in the line before, of the bad leading the bad (god always brings like to like). Homer does not here cite any examples of the good in connection with god bringing like to like. (A poet – Agathon – probably refers to the same line of Homer at *Symposium* 195B.)

¹³ Or (closer to the form of the Greek) ‘about both nature and the whole’; but the chances are that this is a hendiadys. The point is: these are the very people, then, who should know about what is *universally* the case.

These ‘wisest people’ too, then, say that like is ‘friend’ to like just by being like. Who are they? That Socrates specifically refers to writers of prose rules out one candidate, Empedocles, who wrote in verse.¹⁴ Among writers of prose who are interested in any idea of the sort, the star case must surely be Democritus, one of the founders of ancient atomism.¹⁵

For . . . there is a common ancient view . . . about likes’ being capable of recognizing (*gnōristikai*) likes; and it was thought that Democritus too brought in examples to confirm this view, while even Plato touched on it in the *Timaeus*.¹⁶ But as for Democritus, he sets up his argument on the basis of both animate and inanimate things: for, he says, creatures flock together with creatures of like species, as doves do with doves, cranes with cranes, and similarly in the case of all other non-rational creatures; similarly too in the case of inanimate things, as one can see with the sieving of seeds and with pebbles on beaches . . . [It is] as though¹⁷ the likeness in these things had some sort of power to bring them together.¹⁸ (Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* VII.116–18)

So, again, somehow or other (but how, exactly, such ‘wise people’ don’t tell us), likeness alone is enough to bring things together, without the intervention of a separate agent to ‘introduce’ them, ‘make them recognize’ each other.¹⁹

¹⁴ Empedocles does, however, introduce an external agent that creates by bringing likes together: specifically, *Philotēs*, i.e. *Philia* ('Love'), viewed as a separate and divine entity. In that case his position looks rather like the one mined from Homer ('Ever god brings like to like'); and it is tempting to suppose that the Empedoclean case is at least a small part of what both dictates the choice of the Homeric line, and prompts the transition to the cosmologists.

¹⁵ Democritus, and the co-founder of atomism, Leucippus, are never mentioned by name in Plato, but will frequently be likely candidates as targets for his polemics, especially against the idea of a universe governed by necessity and/or chance (see esp. *Laws* x).

¹⁶ Perhaps when he has *Timaeus* talk about ‘elementary’ particles (of fire, air, water and earth) as somehow massing together (at e.g. *Timaeus* 56c), and/or about the even more elementary triangles that make up those particles as ‘meeting with’ each other (56d ff.).

¹⁷ The author of our passage, Sextus, here suggests that there is something mysterious about the mechanism by which likes come together. Socrates in the *Lysis* may perhaps be hinting at the same point when he emphasizes the role of the divine in (Homer’s version of) the like-to-like account of *philia*; Plato himself, in that *Timaeus* passage (see preceding note), has Timaeus put the movement and powers of the elementary particles down to divine causation (56c). (But then what is in question in that context is only a ‘likely story/account’ [290], based on the way things appear: see Rowe 2003a.)

¹⁸ The passage includes what is usually known as ‘fragment’ 164 of Democritus (Diels–Kranz), though it is not clear how much should count as being a direct quotation from Democritus himself.

¹⁹ Is this why Socrates says in *Lysis* 214A3 ‘(the poets’ view is not a bad one,) but (alla) they do claim that it’s god himself that makes (likes) *philoī*, by bringing them to each other?’ That is, is Socrates proposing that the poets don’t get the point – that the likes bring each other together *all by themselves* without any help from the gods – quite right (as the prose-writers do)? Possibly. In any case, Socrates doesn’t think either claim is worth much. And in fact the passage as a whole seems to treat poets and cosmologists as representatives of a single view. Both groups are implied (ironically, of course) to be supremely wise.

One puzzling feature of the way the prose-writers are brought in, in our passage in the *Lysis*, is the suggestion that they ‘converse’, as well as writing, about nature (214B5). ‘Conversing’, or ‘discussing’, *dialegesthai*, is what Plato’s Socrates typically says he does, and not infrequently identifies with the activity of philosophy itself, either explicitly or implicitly using the description to mark the difference between that kind of intellectual discourse and less serious kinds (including any that use writing).²⁰ Not only that, but the reference to ‘conversation’ – even if we suppose that the intellectuals in question went in for it – seems actually redundant, when it’s their written works that Socrates has suggested he’s interested in (“So haven’t you also encountered the prose-writings of the wisest people . . . ?”). Still further, not many, if any, of them²¹ are likely to have been around and available in the same place for actual conversation. Are the natural philosophers (even Democritus?)²² suddenly – and surprisingly – being promoted to the rank of philosophers proper?²³

But there may be a special explanation of this surprising turn. What follows is actually a kind of ‘conversation’ (or discussion), carried on at one remove, with the cosmologists and the poets; Socrates proceeds to take

²⁰ See Chapter 1, n. 27 above. The *Lysis* itself nowhere explicitly identifies *dialegesthai*, ‘conversing’, with philosophizing, but Socrates’ own brand of ‘conversation’ (discussion) continually exemplifies it. The *locus classicus* for philosophy as dialogue, or dialectic (*dialektikē*, sc. *technē*, ‘art’, of *dialegesthai*), in the Platonic corpus is probably *Phaedrus* 275C–278B, a context which turns on, or at least begins from, the differences between oral exchange, on the one hand, and written texts on the other: one of the limitations of the latter is that they just can’t *answer you back* if you ask them questions. Dialogue, on this account, is the only way of making intellectual progress, primarily because – given the right kind of people, with the right attitude – it will allow the possibility of challenge, and prevent the interlocutors from complacently supposing that they have had the last word (the chances of which, given that we human beings lack a gods’-eye view, are vanishingly small). Cf. also *Phaedrus* 269E–270D, on knowledge of ‘the nature of the whole’ as a requirement of all true sciences – a point that seems to bring us back in full circle to our present passage in the *Lysis*, and the reference to those who ‘converse and write about the nature of the universe/nature and the whole’. For more on the philosophical significance of dialectic, see n. 25 below (on the so-called ‘elenchus’), and Chapter 10.

²¹ According to Sextus, in the passage just cited, the view about *philia* in question was widespread among the ancients (those who were ‘ancients’ from his perspective), but Democritus remains the best-attested example that we possess. (Might Sextus’ term *gnōristikos*, ‘capable of recognizing’, as he uses it in the passage cited in the text above, be taken from Democritus, and might Socrates’ *poieι gnōrimon*, ‘makes recognize’, at *Lysis* 214B1 therefore hide a direct verbal allusion to Democritus?)

²² See n. 15 above.

²³ Lombardo (the Hackett translator) renders *dialegesthai* here as ‘reason’; Jowett has simply ‘talk’. Both translations might tend to suggest that we are making mountains out of molehills, and yet for the reasons stated, the choice of the term *dialegesthai* remains striking, and something that looks as if it requires some explanation. (We considered the hypothesis that these cosmologists, like the sophists and the rhetoricians, might have given displays in the market-place, and then invited people to ask questions – which would explain the talk of conversing. There appears not to be any evidence, however, that these cosmologists did engage in such practices.)

their view, as expressed, and with Lysis' help subjects it to examination, just as he examined Lysis' and Menexenus' ideas in person ('my parents love me'; 'if x loves y , then both are friends'). The reference to the prose-writers as 'conversing' perhaps serves as a signal of this examination, which begins with Socrates' question at 214B6: "Well then," I said, "is what they say right?" (We take it that 'they' here refers both to the poets and to the cosmologists. Both will turn out to be committed at least to the good being friend of the good.)

Such a reading of the single word *dialegesthai* may well be thought too speculative.²⁴ But there is nothing at all speculative about the proposal that 214B6 ff. is a version of a typical Socratic cross-examination.²⁵ Socrates immediately launches an objection on behalf of himself and Lysis:

'Well then,' I said, 'is what they say right?'

'Perhaps,' he said.

'Perhaps half of it,' I said, 'and perhaps the whole of it, but we're just not understanding. For it seems to us²⁶ that at any rate so far as one bad (*ponēros*) person 214C1 and another bad person are concerned, the nearer the first approaches the second and the more he associates with him, the more of an enemy [the more *echthros*; 'the more inimical'] he becomes to him, since he treats him unjustly, and it's impossible, I imagine (*pou*), for people who do injustice and people to whom they do it to be friends. Isn't that so?'

'Yes,' he said.

'If we looked at it this way, then, half of what is being claimed wouldn't 214C5 be true; that is, if the bad (*ponēroi*) are like one another.'

'What you say is true.' (214B6–C6)

The objection, then, is that at any rate people who are alike in being bad, i.e. in being the sort of people who treat others unjustly, and cause them damage, won't be *philoī* to each other. The point Socrates makes

²⁴ But (see nn. 23 and 20 above) the use of *dialegesthai* here will still need to be explained: they're *writers*; why are they described as those who 'converse and write . . . ?'

²⁵ On the resistance we (Penner and Rowe) feel to one particular view of Socratic questioning and cross-examination, that of Richard Robinson and Gregory Vlastos, exhibited in their theory of the logic of the so-called 'Socratic elenchus', see Chapter 10, §1. We only need to note here that Vlastos (1994: 29–37) also maintains that, while we find the particular kind of Socratic questioning and cross-examination he labels as 'the Socratic elenchus' throughout many of Plato's early dialogues, this supposed activity is absent from the *Lysis*. We, for our part, cannot imagine what a bit of Socratic questioning or cross-examination would be, on any but a superficial account of what it is, if it turned out not to be exemplified by the opening argument with Lysis concerning his parents' love for him. If Vlastos' account of Socratic questioning and cross-examination turns out to have the consequence that this opening is not a typical bit of Socratic questioning or cross-examination, so much the worse for the account of Socratic dialectic embodied in the Robinson–Vlastos theory.

²⁶ Sc. (to us) as opposed to the wise people whose view we're discussing.

here about the bad harming others is not unexpected:²⁷ if the good is the beneficial, then the bad will be the harmful (so if two bad people meet, either will be as unlikely as the other to want to prolong the encounter). So the poets and the cosmologists have got it wrong – or at least half-wrong (214B8–9).

But how can such wise people be wrong? (The poets are ‘fathers of, leaders in, wisdom’, 214A1–2, the cosmologists are the ‘wisest’ people, B2.) Socrates immediately suggests (214C6–E2, translated below) that there is another way of looking at what poets and cosmologists say according to which all of what they say is correct. We must take them to be ‘riddling’ (214D4), so that ‘like is friend to like’ will hold even if bad is not friend to bad. The idea of ‘riddling’ here is that whether or not they realize it (and we, Penner and Rowe, want to say that they do not), the poets are not talking about the bad at all when they say that like loves like. Just so, Hippothales had thought earlier that what he was saying in his words about Lysis consisted in praises of Lysis alone when in fact (without his realizing it) what he was saying was in praise also of himself.²⁸ If the bad harm each other, then, on the assumption that the bad are like each other, the result

²⁷ The question is: why should *anyone* love what is bad for himself? Cf. some of our remarks in Chapter 3 above, especially on the argument in 213C–D. The role of the good in *philia* will shortly be made more explicit, in 214E2 ff.

²⁸ The idea of riddling that we present here is not perhaps the one that will occur most naturally to the modern reader (or would have occurred, perhaps, even to Socrates’ interlocutors). (i) The way *moderns* are likely to understand Socrates’ use of the expression ‘riddling’ is, we think, this: in Socrates’ view, (a) the poets don’t really think, nor do they (on this view) say, that the like who love the like are only the good. (They don’t mean that only the good are like the good.) It’s just that (b) their words (taken in abstraction from their beliefs or what they are saying) actually refer only to likes which are the good. (Talk of what their words actually refer to, in abstraction from their beliefs or from what they are saying, tends to be put in terms of what they are referring to *de re*: cf. Chapter 10, §2 below.) Thus in saying the poets are riddling, Socrates is slyly suggesting the poets are putting us on. But on the ordinary, modern conception of riddling, this is all irony and pretence on Socrates’ part. Really, the poets are not putting us on. It is Socrates himself who is putting us on in suggesting the poets are putting us on. (This sort of approach to reading Socratic dialogue is an approach via what Penner and Rowe 1994 called the ‘inside-outside’ view of psychological states such as belief and desire: again, cf. Chapter 10, §2.)

Our view of what Socrates has in mind when he speaks of ‘riddling’ is quite different. We think it a mistake to identify what the poets are saying with what the poets think they are saying, or with what they mean (= what they think they mean). We also think it not enough to allow that the poets’ words, i.e. ‘like’, etc., refer solely to the good – *unbeknownst to them, and outside of their minds*. (Again, referring to things *de re* – as if what mattered was not what the poets were referring to, but rather what their words refer to.) For us, then, (2) it is neither a matter of (b) what is referred to outside of the ‘riddlers’ minds, nor of (a) what they are well aware they are consciously referring to. It is a matter rather of (c) a certain intention on their part to refer to whomever the like are, even if the like should turn out to be a different lot from the lot they, the riddlers, currently think they are. It is that intention in (c) which secures the idea that, without realizing it, the poets are excluding the bad from amongst the likes. The principle that this sort of intention is always involved is equivalent to what we called in Chapter 1, n. 16 (cf. also n. 26) the ‘principle of real reference’, which will be the focus of §2 of Chapter 10.

will be that one half of what the poets say will be wrong. In the case of the bad, it won't be the case that like loves like.

'But it seems to me that what they are saying is that the good (*agathoi*) are like each other, and friends (*philoī*), whereas the bad (*kakoi*), by contrast, as is actually said about them, are never alike, even themselves to themselves, but 214D1 are fickle and unstable (*empléktōi te kai astathmētōi*);²⁹ and if anything were to be itself unlike itself, and different from [and/or 'at odds with': *diaphoron*] itself, that thing would hardly be likely to become like or friends (*philon*) with anything else. Doesn't it seem like this to you too?'

'It does to me,' he said.

'This, then, is what they're saying in their riddling way (*ainittontai*), or so it seems to me, my friend (*hetairos*) – those who say 214D5 that like is friend (*philon*) to like: that the good person alone is friend to the good person alone, while the bad person never enters into true friendship either to good or to bad. Does it seem the same to you?'

He nodded assent.

'In that case we already have in our hands the answer to the question who those that are friends are; for the argument³⁰ indicates 214E1 to us that it's whoever are good.'

'Yes, it absolutely seems so,' he said.³¹

'And to me,' I said. (214C6–E2)

²⁹ The term *empléktos* is poetic, but not exclusively so; *astathmētos* is probably decidedly prosaic. Does *astathmētos* gloss the more poetic *empléktos* (which, as it happens, occurs in the Sophocles passage quoted in n. 33 below)? It is also possible, however, that there is a reference here to the sort of complex of ideas that we find at *Protagoras* 356A8–357B4, where the measuring art is introduced as the contrary of badness – getting things wrong – and instability. (And in this passage, the instability is an instability of opinion, and, what is more, an instability *over time*.) That is, the bad man keeps changing over time – as even Aristotle seems to take it: '... the bad man is not one person but many, and is different during the same day, and fickle (*empléktos*)' (*Eudemian Ethics* vii.6, 124ob16–17). In this passage, Aristotle is probably referring to, and filling out, our present passage in the *Lysis*; that is, given other connections between this part of Aristotle's treatise and our dialogue – see our Epilogue below. (This is especially likely because of the combination of the subject-matter with the use of the particular word *empléktos* – which, even if it might after all have been in common use, seems pretty dispensable in the context.) There is one salient difference, however, between Socrates and Aristotle on this question of what is *empléktos/on*. For a few lines before in the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle has told us that 'things[?] are in discord in the bad (*ponérōs*) man, as for example [if that is how we are to understand *hoion* here] in the akratic', i.e. the un-self-controlled type (124ob12–13), and here what Aristotle has in mind appears to be a matter of synchronic internal discord. Hence, this time, not an instability in *beliefs* and *over time*, but rather a conflicting of *desires*, and at the very same instant. On this contrast between Socrates and Aristotle in the understanding of *akrasia*, see Penner 1997b and Penner 1996. This would give us a quite different sort of 'fickleness', or at any rate of 'instability' – one which, however, by the end of the *Lysis*, will implicitly have been ruled out of Socrates' own view of the nature of human agents (insofar as he will have set up a position in which such agents cannot act *against* their judgement, only in accordance with it); so it will probably be best to suppose that, to the extent that Socrates, here in the *Lysis*, is actually saying what *he* thinks, it is changeability over time that after all he has in mind.

³⁰ Or, more neutrally, 'what has been said' (*ho logos*). Recall here what was said in §1 above: the present argument has done nothing to show why the bad do not love the good. Cf. also n. 43 below.

³¹ This reply of Lysis' perhaps falls just short of complete assent, because of the 'seems' (*doket*). However the separation, in the Greek, of this element from the 'Yes, absolutely' (or '*Absolutely*':

On this showing, the whole of what they are saying when they say ‘like is friend to like’ is true (or, at any rate, might be true), whether the poets and cosmologists are aware they are saying this or not.³² Passages can certainly be found in the poets where they in fact also say (with an insight, though not an understanding, that Socrates himself frequently recognizes) something like ‘the bad are not even like themselves’.³³ Their ‘riddling’ consists in the way in which what they are saying (unbeknownst to themselves) forces a puzzlement on us – a puzzlement which Socrates hopes will lead us to see that what they are saying is something quite startlingly different from what their explicit claim appears to say, and indeed from what they think they are saying.³⁴ What they are saying is (unbeknownst to themselves) merely

panu ge), by the *ephē* ('he said'), probably appears to give it more emphasis than it actually has (what he said, after all, was just 'It absolutely seems so,' and Socrates picks up in ε2 with 'And to me').

³² On the contrast between what they are saying and what they are *aware* they are saying, see n. 28 above.

On a different matter: there is still the worry that however many may be the respects in which the bad are *unlike* the bad, there is still a crucial way in which the bad will be like the bad, namely, *merely in their being bad*. So ‘like is friend to like’ will still be incorrect, even though the bad are also *unlike* the bad in most of the relevant respects. How is Socrates to be defended against this difficulty? The first method to occur to a modern might be this: to say that though the use of the word ‘bad’ for a wide group of people *suggests* the existence of a single attribute, being bad, which is had in common by all those so called, nevertheless there is no such attribute. In that case, the *so-called* bad could just be unlike, without being like in being bad, there being no such thing as being bad. (The idea here would be in some respects like the Aristotelian/Thomist idea that there are many ways of being bad, but only one way of being good – so that there is no *one* thing, *being bad*: cf. *Eudemian Ethics* vii.4, 1239b11–17.) It does not seem to us impossible that had Socrates been faced with this objection – to the effect that two bad people will have to be alike in being bad – he would have met the difficulty, in this modern manner, by denying that there is any such attribute. Put in a way that will carry resonance later on in our treatment (see Chapter 5, § below), it could be Socrates’ position that bad is merely the privation of good. As Plato might have put the point in the *Sophist* (257A–258A), there is a Form of Good, but no Form of Bad, only things that partake in Other with respect to the Form of the Good. (The not-beautiful exists in a certain way, but not by there being a form of Non-Beauty.)

³³ Compare Sophocles, *Ajax* 1355–60:

ODYSSEUS: This man [Ajax] is my enemy, but once he was noble.

AGAMEMNON: What are you thinking of? Do you thus revere an enemy’s corpse?

ODYSSEUS: His excellence moves me far more than his enmity.

AGAMEMNON: Such a man must be fickle (*emplektos*) indeed!

ODYSSEUS: Many, for sure, that are friends now will be enemies tomorrow.

AGAMEMNON: And do you approve of getting friends like *that*?

We doubt this bit of Sophocles can be taken as evidence that in the passage in the *Lysis* Socrates is saying the poets will explicitly *deny* that bad are like the bad. ‘The poets’ will undoubtedly say both things – that the bad are unlike even themselves, and also that the bad are like the bad (cf. preceding note). And the passage cited from Homer is explicitly (in the line immediately preceding the passage quoted) about the bad being like the bad (see n. 12 above).

³⁴ For other examples of similar ‘riddling’ see *Apology* 21B ff., cf. 37E–38A (the Delphic oracle), 26E–28A (Meletus), *Republic* I, 331D–334B (Simonides). Cf. also Socrates’ reading of Simonides at

that the good are like the good, so that all that is said is that the good love the good.³⁵

Socrates will next demonstrate that the poets and cosmologists are also wrong about the good loving the good. But before we turn to that new phase, there are still some crucial questions that remain to be answered about the one currently under discussion: why exactly, given the initial proposal from the poets that it's likeness that explains *philia*, is this proposal immediately interpreted in terms of only two sorts of likeness – that of the good to the good, and of the bad to the bad? True, Homer is particularly interested in that kind of likeness.³⁶ But the cosmologists show no sign of special interest in the pair bad/good. (Theirs is a project going well beyond just human action.)

The ultimate reason why Socrates needs the good and the bad here, and not other categories, is in fact that the good and the bad and not other categories will be central to his account of *philia*. (Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII.1, 1155b8–12, where there is a suggestion of the same sort of restriction in discussing ‘like loves like’.) But that is still a long way off; Socrates and the boys still have a great deal of work to do before they get there. For now, Socrates starts to build on the conversation with Menexenus. This showed, in effect, that there must be more to loving than someone’s happening to take a fancy to someone or something; and Homer’s line suggests what that something more might be, namely likeness – now, by 214D8–EI, read as intending that only the good are friends. (The next question will be whether it’s their being alike that makes them friends, or their goodness: apparently, neither . . .)

However there is something else here that may cause puzzlement, as it certainly did, for a time, to one of us (Rowe). Up to now, good and bad seem to have been interchangeable with useful and useless: see 204A (Micrus), 204A–B (Socrates), and the closing stages of the initial conversation between Socrates and Lysis (especially 210C6, 8, D2, the last specifically pairing usefulness with goodness). So why, some readers may ask, does 214B8–EI bring in bad characters (‘isn’t that what *ponēroi* – B8, C1 – usually

Protagoras 343C ff., where the Socratic truth that no one errs willingly is said to be what Simonides is claiming – to the incredulous scorn of Carson 1992. (Carson is working within the framework that what someone – say, Simonides – is *saying* is restricted to what he or she *thinks* he or she is saying. Contrast our remarks in n. 28 above, as well as the account of *what Euthyphro is saying* in Chapter 10, n. 3 below.) See the preliminary note to the present chapter (and Rowe 2004, for an exploratory treatment of the Simonides episode in *Protagoras* that follows the general lines suggested in that note, albeit in an exploratory and not wholly successful way).

³⁵ Again, see Chapter 1, n. 16 above on Hippothales as really (unbeknownst to himself) singing praises to *himself*, and on the ‘principle of real reference’.

³⁶ See n. 12 above.

are', the thought might be, 'people with bad characters?')³⁷ Such people may well be useless, and ignorant, but in any case their main characteristic seems (does it not) to be singled out, here in 214B8–C3, as being that they – characteristically? – commit injustice against others (c2–3); and the connection of that feature with uselessness, as so far understood, is less than immediately obvious (surely?).

Our response, should anyone be puzzled in this way, is that while the language used might make it tempting to suppose that a new perspective is being introduced here, the temptation should be resisted. This is for several reasons. (1) Not only has being good and bad, of persons, been identified in the *Lysis* up to this point with the possession or lack of whatever it is that is useful or beneficial³⁸ (so far, in each case, some sort of expertise), but Socrates will continue to operate with that same understanding of the goodness and badness of persons in the sequel – most immediately in 215A3–C3 (see below). (2) Even if we take it that there is some appeal here to the frequent association of *ponēria* with badness of character, the associations in play in the Homeric context Socrates referred to in 214A–B have more to do with social standing than with anything we might recognize as character: Eumaeus (himself a goatherd) is insulting a thoroughly upstanding and loyal swineherd and – what he thinks is – a beggar (*Odysseus*).³⁹ The choice of the term *ponēros* in 214B8–C5 will then partly be explained by the need to move

³⁷ That is, the term *ponēros* might be claimed to have different associations from *kakos*, for which (uniquely in the present passage, for the *Lysis*) it temporarily substitutes. (Believers in meanings will say that 'useless', 'bad', and 'base' or 'shameful' all have different meanings.) But the question is whether Plato is exploiting these associations (or these meanings) or whether, on the other hand, he is simply using *ponēros* interchangeably with *kakos*, and so ignoring any such associations (or meanings). See also nn. 41, 42 below, as well as the discussion in Chapter 10, n. 23 of the well-known 'fallacy' which Sachs alleges Plato commits in the *Republic*. Those troubled by the absence of the distinctively *morally* bad from the reading of *ponēria* should consider in tandem the absence of the distinctively *morally* good from the discussion of the fine (*kalon*, opposite to *aischron*, 'base', 'shameful', 'ugly'), the good, and the pleasant at *Gorgias* 474E–476A. 'The fine' here, under which might be included the *just* (cf. 491E), is the term by means of which many interpreters suggest (incorrectly, we suppose) Aristotle refers to the distinctively moral good. But the only two ways considered in the present *Gorgias* passage for something to be *kalon* are (a) by its being good, i.e. useful, i.e. beneficial, and (b) by its being pleasant – or by a combination of the two things. ('Useful' here, not as in Aristotle, just for some further end which is itself a means to other goods, but – as always in Socrates – including being good or beneficial in the way in which the agent's happiness is good or beneficial.) If, when Socrates uses this assumption about the fine – that it can only be *kalon* by being good or pleasant (or both) – he is, as we suppose, using a premiss he himself endorses, that clinches the present point. (But we realize, of course, that interpreters might argue that the premiss in question in the *Gorgias* context is only being used *ad hominem* against Socrates' opponent Polus. Indeed, we suppose that those interpreters who think *kalon* is used by Socrates and Aristotle for moral good will *have* to argue thus.)

³⁸ That is, beneficial to the agent (see Chapter 2, §3 above, and § 4(i) below: it is Lysis' usefulness to himself that is in question, not the benefit he brings to his parents).

³⁹ Cf. n. 12 above.

away from this social ‘badness’. But in any case (3) if we take any pair of conventionally bad people, say two thieves, and think of them ‘approaching’ and ‘associating with’ each other (c1), it is immediately clear that there will be no opposition, nor even any clear distinction, between considerations of injustice and justice and considerations of harm and benefit in relation to their dealings with each other; for unless there is after all honour among thieves, the two, as thieves, will simply damage one another (one another’s projects).⁴⁰ More generally, (4) Socrates’ strategy here requires only that he too should think thieves bad,⁴¹ not that he should surreptitiously have introduced a different notion of badness from the one he has evidently been using so far (and will use again). Having a non-conventional view of things, or what gives every appearance of being such, does not commit him to developing a new language,⁴² any more than it commits him to a different view of the way people actually behave (only to a different view of why they do it). So he can happily go on referring to others’, e.g. the poets’, perspectives, and the names they use, e.g. *ponēros*, and ‘fickle and unstable’, while differing from those others on the real diagnosis or explanation of what badness is.⁴³

⁴⁰ See Chapter 2, n. 12 above on the interchangeability of *treating unjustly* and *harming* in the *Crito*; that note will provide a useful backdrop to the present paragraph as a whole.

⁴¹ He will also, of course, have to be able to explain the badness of thieves and other conventionally bad people in terms of his own understanding of badness; the *Lysis* does not give us much in the way of direct help on this score, but it does give every indication of being in line with that (other) well-known Socratic dictum ‘virtue is knowledge’, around which several Platonic dialogues, e.g. *Charmides*, *Euthyphro*, and *Laches*, are constructed. Cf. e.g. the unexplained pairing of justice and wisdom at (*Lysis*) 207D1–2, and the identification of *to kalon*, ‘the beautiful/fine/admirable’, with *to agathon*, the good, at 216C–D.

⁴² So there are such things as *ponēria* and injustice in Socrates’ universe (that is, the universe of the Socrates of the *Lysis*). But to admit this is not to admit that what such things are is things corresponding exactly to the notions of simply anyone who uses such words (or to what just anyone means, or to what just anyone thinks they are referring to). On the contrary, we hold that even if there are two different notions here according to most people, nevertheless the attribute referred to by these two expressions is one and the same. In our view too much interpretation of Socratic dialogue has proceeded as if what is being referred to by means of certain referring expressions is determined by what a particular interlocutor means by the expression – as if meaning determined reference. (More on meaning in Chapter 10 below, esp. in §2.)

⁴³ One more question about 214A2–E2 before we leave it. The bad, Socrates seems to say, won’t be (true) friends to anyone – not the good, and not (sc. even?) to their own kind (214D6–7). We have had an argument of sorts for his saying that bad won’t be friends to bad, namely, that they will harm each other; and we can easily fill out from this why the bad won’t love bad things, either. (The whole of the present conversation is framed at least in the first instance in terms of interpersonal relationships, but – as we shall see, if it is not clear enough already – its results will need to be extended, and will in fact implicitly be extended, to relationships between people and things too. See [following note](#).) But why won’t the bad be friends to good (people or things)? Why won’t the same motivation that makes them shy away from bad things make them tend towards good ones? Why won’t everyone be friend to, love, good things? The claim – that the bad won’t be friends to good – will be important in later contexts (perhaps at 216D8–E1; certainly at 217CI–2, 218AI–2), and it is apparently assumed

4 214E2–215C2

At this point Socrates feels uneasy about the (supposed) accommodation he and Lysis have just reached with their imagined interlocutors:

'And yet there's something in it [sc. our conclusion] that leaves me unhappy. So come on, by Zeus! Let's have a look at what it is that I'm suspicious about. Is the like person friend to the like to the extent that he is like him, and is such a person **214E5** useful (*chrēsimos*) to another such? Or rather, put it like this: what benefit [*lōphelia*, 'help', 'assistance'] would anything whatever⁴⁴ that's like anything else whatever be capable of having for that other thing, or what harm could it do it, that it couldn't also have for itself or do to itself? Or what [sc. benefit or harm?] could it be subjected to that it couldn't also be **215A1** subjected to by itself? Things like that – how would they be prized (*agapan*) by each other, when there's no aid (*epikouria*)⁴⁵ they have to give each other? Is there any way they could be?'

'There isn't.'

'And whatever wasn't prized, how would it be a friend (*philon*)?'

'There's no way it would be.'

'But in that case (*alla dē*) the like person isn't friend to his like; but the good to the good, **215A5** to the extent that he's good and not to the extent that he's like, could he be a friend?'

'Perhaps.'

'But what about this: wouldn't the good person, to the extent that he's good, to that extent be sufficient for himself?'

'Yes.'

'But the one who's sufficient wouldn't be needing anything, with respect to his sufficiency.'⁴⁶

here. Having raised the question, however, and acknowledged its importance, we propose to leave our response to it till later (see Chapter 5, §1(ii) below).

⁴⁴ The switch to the neuter gender here at 214E5 (back again to masculine at 215A3–4, at least in subject position; masculines in object position again from 215B3–C1) seems mainly to signal the introduction of a highly general point – as already, *passim*, in the exchange between Socrates and Menexenus; while there will certainly be neuter objects of *philia* (212E), the Socrates of the *Lysis* is, so far as one can tell, only interested in cases where there are humans on the subject side; though other animals briefly surface at 221A. (If we apply the ideas in question back to people again, then all sorts of questions are immediately raised, of the sort that we find Aristotle discussing: in what sense, if at all, can we talk of people as doing things – being friends, enemies, committing injustice – *to themselves*? But such questions, even if suggested by the passage, are plainly not relevant to its immediate purposes.)

⁴⁵ It is important to note the direct train of thought linking successively the *useful* (E4), the *beneficial* (E6) and that which *renders assistance* (*epikouria*: 215A2, on which see also below, n. 51). We (Penner and Rowe), in line with the thought of nn. 38 and 40–2 above, nn. 46–8, 50 below, regard the expressions 'being useful', 'being beneficial', and 'rendering assistance' as referring to the same attribute (however differently such expressions may strike us in other contexts, or in the mouths of other authors). Nothing less will make sense of the argument.

⁴⁶ There are two important points to be made about the appearance here of the idea of self-sufficiency. (i) As the preceding note linked, and indeed for purposes of the present argument identified, the notions of the *useful*, the *beneficial* and of what *renders assistance*, so here in 215A7–8 we (Penner

'No question about it.'

'But the sort of person who doesn't 215B1 need a thing [or 'anything']? wouldn't prize a thing ['anything'] either.'

'No, he wouldn't.'

'And what he didn't prize, he wouldn't love either.'

'Certainly not.'

'But if someone doesn't love, he isn't a friend [isn't *philos*].'

'It doesn't appear so.'

'How then on our account (*hēmin*) will the good be friends to the good at all (*tēn archēn*), if they're not going to miss each other 215B5 when they're away from each other (since they're sufficient for themselves even when they're apart), and they're also going to have no need for each other when they are both there? People in that sort of situation – what's going to bring it about that they make much of each other?'⁴⁷

'Nothing,' he said.

'But 215C1 they wouldn't be friends if they didn't make much of each other.'

'True.' (214E2–215C2)

This stretch obviously falls into two parts: (i) 214E2–215A4 (which rules out 'like loves like' on grounds of lack of usefulness, benefits, aid), and (ii) 215A4–215C2 (which attempts to save 'good loves good', even while dropping 'like loves like').

(i) 214E2–215A4

The starting-point here is just that to be *philos* to something (or someone) else, a person (or thing) needs to get, or expect to get, something⁴⁸ out of the encounter: 'Is the like person friend to the like to the extent that he is like him, and is such a person useful to another such?' (214E3–5). This is the first time in the dialogue where the usefulness of some object or

and Rowe) suggest that *lacking self-sufficiency* and needing *something* must be taken as identical (that is, again, for the purposes of the present argument). What is more, we suggest that the argument requires that we identify the beneficial or useful with that which is needed. The beneficial is what addresses lack of self-sufficiency. But now (2) there is also another identity that the argument appears to assert, and one that occasions what could turn out to be some very serious difficulties in grasping what Socrates has in mind at all here. For the text implies the perfectly astonishing claim that in this context for a person to be *good* is for that person to be self-sufficient, so that, presumably, to be good is to be doing well, i.e. to be happy. On the difficulty that is occasioned for this view by the Aristotelian case of the virtuous man on the rack, see on 215A4–215C2 (= section (ii)) below for discussion. Our general orientation concerning what is to be done with this serious problem was outlined in §1 of the present chapter.

⁴⁷ A slightly more literal translation of the Greek would be 'how would it be contrived that such people should make much of each other?' ('by what contrivance, *mēchanē*, would they . . .?').

⁴⁸ Some 'use', as clearly implied by *chrēsimos*, 'useful', in 214E4, and *ōphelial/blabē*, 'benefit'/'harm' in E6; cf. *epikouria*, 'aid', at 215A2.

person *y* has been understood in terms of use to some person *x* other than *y*; for it will be recalled that in the discussion with Lysis on his parents' love of him, the benefit the parents sought in their love for Lysis was (*pace* some commentators on the dialogue) the benefit of Lysis, not that of his parents.⁴⁹ In the next sub-section, 215A4–215C2, the notion of benefit will be paired with the notion of need (with no limitation on exactly what will be found 'useful', or what 'needed').⁵⁰ But then, immediately after having put this initial question about use, Socrates replaces it with a broader question: 'Or rather, put it like this: what benefit would anything whatever that's like anything else whatever be capable of having for that other thing, or what harm could it do it . . .?' So, Socrates implies: not only will like have nothing by way of benefit (or 'help', *ophelia*) to offer to like, there won't even be any harm (*blabē*) it could do it that it couldn't also do to itself; and equally there's no benefit or harm that could be done to it by its like that couldn't also be done to it by itself. Whatever the subject and whatever the object, if subject and object are like one another – at any rate if they are alike in all respects (see §I above), there won't be any assistance subject can get from object, or indeed harm either; whatever effect might be worked by the object on the subject can already be worked on itself by the subject alone, insofar as it is itself what the object is (good, bad, in the best situation or the worst). There will be nothing that like will have to 'outsource', as it were,⁵¹ from like, since it can already produce everything it could get from its like (to the extent that it is like), from its own private resources. So in this case, i.e. if *x* is exactly like *y*, there is nothing to make *y* 'useful' (214E4) to *x*, nothing to make *x* 'prize' *y*, and so nothing to make *y* *philon* to *x* (215A1, 3) – namely because whatever *y* might do for *x* it can already do for itself. But 'like loves like' was meant to be an entirely general claim. So the claim falls.

⁴⁹ See 210A–D. Cf. also Socrates' description of himself as 'useless' at 204C1.

⁵⁰ We have urged above (nn. 45, 46) the identity – *in this context* – of the useful, the beneficial, that which aids, and the needed. (Again, *outside* the context of the present argument, and in other authors, these notions may come apart – distinct attributes may be involved; as when, for example, Aristotle contrasts the useful with the pleasant and the good.) To speak of such an identity as this is not, of course, to deny, even for the present context, that in speaking of such an identity one will have to make careful adjustments. Thus what is useful and what is needed will probably turn out to be the same thing, only viewed in the first case from the perspective of the object (a needed object will have a use), in the second from that of the subject (something will have a use insofar as it is needed by a subject). We take the making of such adjustments to be in principle straightforward.

⁵¹ The commercial metaphor ('outsourcing') here is perhaps appropriate, given that in ordinary language *epikouria* (the word used for 'aid' in 215A2) may be bought in, i.e. from *epikouroi* in the shape of mercenaries, as well as given freely.

Of course if two things are only like in some respects, then the possibility arises that when both fall short of being good (or wise) and one is rich and the other poor, then the poor man could love the rich if the circumstances involved are those in which more money would benefit him. Against this possibility, we have to confess, we see no defence for Socrates – though we see nothing implausible in supposing, as we have so far supposed, that his concern here is just with those who are alike in all respects. On the other hand it will be considerably *less* plausible to argue that he is similarly limiting himself to likes in all respects when he discusses the good loving the good, in the immediately [following section](#), or when he deals with the neither-good-nor-bad loving the neither-good-nor-bad later at 216E. In those contexts, we will feel it necessary to deal with cases where *x* and *y* are alike in being good – in the [next section](#) – or neither-good-nor-bad – in 216E – but where they differ in other respects, e.g. in external circumstances. (The only emergency escape-route here would be to maintain that Socrates was arguing against the thesis that all likes love likes, whether they are things that are alike in all respects or things that are alike in some respects only. Then the failure for the case of exact likeness would be a failure for the general thesis. And we have seen Socrates looking for general theses, e.g. in Chapter 3, §(c).) If Socrates is less transparent about what his intentions are here than we would like, that is – we claim – because he has a clear view of where he is going, and of his reasons for going there; reasons, however, that he fails to allow to surface, as we may feel, quite as soon as he should.

We pause briefly, before passing on to the next and distinctly more problematical section of Socrates' argument in 214A4–215A4, to note his assumption here in 214E2–215A4 that loving something involves the lover's getting some benefit from the thing loved. This assumption, which we saw coming earlier,⁵² but which properly surfaces here for the first time in the text of the *Lysis*, is – as we acknowledged – highly doubtful to most modern moral philosophers, and indeed to most moderns generally. The assumption, far less problematic to moderns when it is a matter of 'desire' than when it is a matter of 'love' or friendship, is tantamount to another assumption of Socrates', that he can treat friendship and desire interchangeably (that is, as it will turn out, desire for the good; but, as it will also transpire, there is no other kind of desire). This second assumption is increasingly evident in later parts of the *Lysis*. When we reach those later parts, there will be a much larger framework within which to fit our first responses (i.e. our responses in Chapters 2 and 3) to the typical modern

⁵² See Chapter 2, n. 38, Chapter 3, §(c).

objection to Socrates' apparent reduction of friendship and love to a ('mere') matter of utility.

(ii) 215A4–215C2

So it's not like that's *philos*, friend, to like. But maybe, suggests Socrates, we can still salvage the idea that it's the good that's *philos* to the good, as an independent proposal: maybe the good is *philos* to good not 'to the extent that' (*kath' hoson*) it is like, but 'to the extent that it is good'.⁵³ (The argument that 'like loves like' based upon an appeal merely to likeness, at any rate to likeness in all respects, will not succeed: that much is already clear.) So now he tries an argument that 'like loves like when both likes are also good' based upon appeal to the likes being good. But this argument too will fail, he claims. Just *kath' hoson* good, 'to the extent that' he is good, a person will be 'sufficient for himself'; but the person who is sufficient is in need of nothing 'with respect to his sufficiency' (*kata tēn hikanotēta*, 215A8), and the one who doesn't need something won't prize it either;⁵⁴ so, since the one who doesn't prize something won't, either, *philein* it, and the one who doesn't love isn't *philos*, we get the result that the good won't be *philoi* to the good at all. (That is: not only is it not the case that no one but the good could be *philoi*, but so far as our argument goes, the good can't be friends to each other.)⁵⁵

But how, one might well wonder, can Socrates claim that the good are self-sufficient (cf. n. 46 above)? If we take 'the good' here in the natural way, we would have to suppose it stood for 'good people' or 'good persons'. But then the claim that the good are self-sufficient seems to be immediately refutable from the sensible Aristotelian observation that virtuous people are *not, eo ipso*, self-sufficient. (The virtuous man on the rack, again.) We have spoken in §1 above about the difficulties involved here and about our proposed solution to these difficulties: that self-sufficiency here is to be understood as self-sufficiency considerations of luck and external circumstances aside – an understanding that would commit Socrates to a notion of the *maximum self-sufficiency available* (what we called '*practicable* self-sufficiency'); and that it is *this* self-sufficiency which wisdom – on

⁵³ Sc. while also being like – still, for the moment in all respects; we will raise the more difficult cases where the likeness is only in some respects, or one respect (see §1, esp. n. 2, above).

⁵⁴ The slight ambiguity noticed in the translation of 215A8–B1 ('... the sort of person who doesn't need a thing [or 'anything?'] wouldn't prize a thing ['anything?'] either') seems unimportant; we move in any case from needing nothing to not prizes something, i.e. the object the theory (the one we're discussing) says we should be prizes.

⁵⁵ See §5 below for a discussion of this specific claim.

Socrates' account – has to offer us. Wisdom, in other words, is identified with *maximum happiness available to us, starting from where we happen to be now.*

Here is one defence of this move; and it will begin to address that other sort of case that we have been carefully skirting around so far – the sort of case where the likeness in 'likes who are good love likes who are good' is a matter not of likeness in all respects, but of likeness in only some respects, or in only one (goodness). The defence starts with the idea of desire for good: the desire for the good that we suppose Socrates to be interested in is not mere felt desire, but desire that might actually accomplish something – *practicable* desire, we may call it. But then the wise person will be able, by virtue of being wise, to accomplish everything he desires *that can be accomplished*. How does that help? Our reply is this. There are two cases: the good (or wise) who are *exactly* alike and the good (or wise) who while alike in their goodness (or wisdom) differ in other respects, e.g. their circumstances, one being poor and the other being rich. In the first case, the problem arises when both are, say, in need because poor. In the second case, the problem arises when both are good, but one is poor and one is rich. How, in the first case, can they be self-sufficient if both are too poor to get enough food for themselves and their families – or if both are on the rack? The answer here can only be that each is as self-sufficient as is practicable for them in the circumstances – unless their wisdom enables them to gain access to good things from others. But in that case they are once more as self-sufficient as practicable, given what they can get from others. (Nevertheless, it must be admitted that this is not absolute self-sufficiency, but simply the greatest amount of self-sufficiency as is available to them in their circumstances.)

As for the second case, we propose to make a similar move. Let us consider two wise people, A and B, and let us suppose that they are not after all completely alike; B has resources not immediately at A's disposal which would free A from his or her suffering. It might be said that since in these circumstances A already has the wisdom required to elicit those resources from B (by persuading B of the desirability for both of them of making those resources available to him or her), *those resources* are in fact already available to A. The wise person, in that way, already has what the Aristotelian objection suggests he lacks in comparison to another wise person. (See 207C10: 'what friends have is said to be in common between them'.) But as we have just seen in the first case, the wise person would also have the same use of wisdom available to him or her in connection with people *other* than the wise whose resources he or she needs.

If this looks rather too much of a stretch (or to put it another way, it looks just *too* ‘scholastic’: see §1 above), still our own considered view is that no apology is needed for the distinction between complete self-sufficiency and such self-sufficiency as one’s circumstances will allow. All the same, we grant that a better defence is needed. We think one can be found by considering the distinction between complete or ideal happiness, on the one hand, and *practicable* happiness on the other. Here we propose a minor, but important, criticism of Aristotle’s treatment of happiness. While in the main Aristotle is careful to distinguish ideal happiness and practicable happiness, he also tends to confuse these things, or at any rate not to distinguish them clearly. ‘Activity of soul in accordance with its most perfect dispositions’ – to paraphrase his famous definition of happiness in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.7 – works only for ideal happiness. Now one does not need to cast doubt on the absolutely fundamental nature of what is arguably Aristotle’s single most important contribution to ethical theory – the idea of an activity of the soul – to note that it could easily be the case that a person’s practicable happiness involved sacrificing the exercise of some of his or her more perfect dispositions (say, to reflection or ‘contemplation’) in favour of more material concerns: earning money, for example, to save a loved one’s life. Since Aristotle himself insists that his good is a practicable good (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1.7, 1097a15–24; vi.7, 1141b10–12), his own account of happiness should not in this way conflate, as it appears sometimes to do, ideal and practicable happiness. As for Socrates, both the theory of desire for good and the theory of happiness that we attribute to him have this feature of being *practicable* and not *ideal*. If we are right to attribute these theories to him, then the self-sufficiency at issue will be not absolute or ideal, but practicable. In that case, to speak of needing something that is unavailable to one is not, after all, lack of (practicable) self-sufficiency.

This is, at any rate, the best that can be said on the option we propose for dealing with what – as should by now be clear enough – we acknowledge as a difficult problem. There is no question that if we interpret self-sufficiency as Aristotle sometimes does, i.e. as absolute self-sufficiency, then the wise are not self-sufficient. But if we interpret it as practicable self-sufficiency, and think of the desire for happiness as the desire for one’s maximum *practicable* happiness, then, we think, Socrates can meet these challenges.

It may seem that in appealing to practicable self-sufficiency as opposed to ideal self-sufficiency, we are simply ignoring the effect of circumstances on our life – the effect of the hand we are dealt, of the luck of the draw. But here are two further, more purely exegetical, considerations. (1) We claim that,

in this context and in general (for better or worse), Socrates seems not to be much concerned with the operation of luck in human life; his treatment in the *Euthydemus* goes so far as to suggest that we make our own luck – for *good* luck (*eutuchia*) is there actually identified with knowledge (see Chapter 11, §8 below). This is of course strongly corroborative of what we have said above about the difference between ideal and practicable self-sufficiency, and between seeking ideal happiness, on the one hand, and on the other seeking the maximum of happiness available to one, starting from where luck has located one. As for bad luck, for someone who – like Socrates – claims not to know whether even death is a good or a bad thing it might not be a straightforward matter to say what sort of luck is actually to count as bad. (2) While Aristotle and others (doubtless including the poets and cosmologists) might want Socrates to be talking about ideal self-sufficiency, self-sufficiency as Socrates uses it later in the dialogue – as a self-sufficiency that wisdom gives us (218A–B) – *cannot* by Aristotelian criteria be complete or ideal self-sufficiency. We infer that the way Socrates *uses* self-sufficiency is therefore in terms of the *maximum of self-sufficiency*, given the luck we start with.

On such an understanding of self-sufficiency – as self-sufficiency in wisdom – there is no terminal damage, from the remarks about self-sufficiency in the passage of the *Lysis* currently before us, to Socrates' overall argument (see further §5 below). The real gap in that argument has to do with the fact that he restricts himself in the *preceding* argument, i.e. in 214E2–215A3, in relation to likes 'to the extent that they are likes', to likes that are likes in all respects. If the reader is not happy with what we say on this point, namely that because of the case of likes that are like in all respects, the universal thesis that like loves like in *all* cases (including those that are exactly alike) is false, then there will be a careless gap in Socrates' argument. (One might be tempted to try saying that actually the argument was about 'good loves good' all along, i.e. even in 214E2–215A3. But Socrates clearly needs to argue against 'like loves like', not least because he will refer back to such an argument at 216E5, in relation to 'the neither good nor bad loves the neither good nor bad': see Chapter 5 below.) This is the point at which we have to fall back on the preliminary note to this chapter: what Socrates wants to show is simply that in 'x loves y', the y has to be a certain self-sufficient good, and the x cannot be a good, but must be something neither good nor bad. If we pursue this line of thought, we must say that the treatment of the poets and cosmologists can only be designed to drag in earlier than we are ready for them – and so in a 'cavalier' way: see §1 above – the larger truths he will get to only later (i.e. at 216C ff.).

5 CAN WE REALLY TAKE SOCRATES SERIOUSLY WHEN HE CONCLUDES THAT THE GOOD WILL NOT BE FRIENDS TO THE GOOD (215B7–C1)?

Doubts may remain. Can Socrates really be (meant to be) serious about saying that the good can't be *philoī* to the good? This has been a major sticking-point for modern readers of the *Lysis*.⁵⁶ Aristotle, after all, treats friendship between the good ('virtue-friendship') not just as *a* form of *philia*, but as the highest or primary form; and in any case (to repeat the question), why wouldn't good people love each other, and indeed good people above all? Viewed like this, 215A4–215C2 begins to look like a (or yet another?) crucial moment in the *Lysis*: is Socrates being serious, or is he after all just playing with us, and with Lysis – that is, not just by anticipating results to which he is not yet entitled, but even by advancing theses to which he has not even a smidgeon of commitment? And to that we might want to respond: games of *that* sort may be good enough for, and of benefit to, a *Lysis*, but we adults may be forgiven for finding them a bit tiresome, and for feeling inclined to lay the *Lysis* to one side. Alternatively, the more sympathetic reader or interpreter⁵⁷ will want to find a way of showing that Socrates doesn't after all mean to deny that the good love the good.

However it will be evident from the preceding section that we, Penner and Rowe, have chosen not to take either of these options. (Apart from anything else, we see no evidence elsewhere in the *Lysis* that Socrates is content merely to play games with anyone, whether us, or Lysis and Menexenus, or even Hippothales. And if he doesn't mean to deny that the good love the good, then on our view the whole argument of the *Lysis* ceases to hang together – which is likely to raise rather larger worries about Socrates' seriousness than anything he says, or seems to some to be saying, about good people. The observant reader will remember that we have used this sort of reasoning before; it seems to us as sound as ever.) We take some comfort from the fact that, for all his talk about the friendship of the good as *the* friendship, Aristotle himself confronts a very similar puzzle about whether the virtuous person *who is also happy* has any need of friends (see especially *Eudemian Ethics* VII.12, 1244b1–1245b19; *Nicomachean Ethics* IX.9, 1169b3–1170b19). Indeed, Aristotle's final view of the puzzle whether happy people need friends is that it is a pseudo-puzzle, in that one *won't* be happy without

⁵⁶ See especially Bolotin 1979 and Bordt 1998, whose concerns, however, echo the classic argument between von Arnim (1914, 1916) and Pohlenz (1916); Bolotin ends with a twenty-five-page appendix on 'The Pohlenz–von Arnim Controversy about the *Lysis*'.

⁵⁷ So, most eloquently in recent years, Bordt.

friends. (The class of those who are happy and so don't need friends is empty.) Aristotle even sometimes puts the puzzle in a form suggestive of our line of thought above about practicable self-sufficiency. Thus he says, at *Eudemian Ethics* vii.12, 1244b10–11, 'Consequently the happiest human being also will have very little need of a friend, except insofar as to be self-sufficient is impossible.'

But in spite of some considerable convergence between them on this last point, we cannot ignore the fact that there remain two crucial differences between our Socrates and Aristotle. First, as we have already noted briefly, 'good person', for Aristotle, is 'person of good character' ('virtuous': hence our reference to 'virtue-friendship' above); for Socrates, by contrast, good people are people who possess what is good, i.e. the object of their desire – as the present context in the *Lysis* amply demonstrates.⁵⁸ Secondly, for Socrates – apparently – a good person will, or would, *eo ipso* be self-sufficient as well as happy, whereas for Aristotle, if they are to be happy and self-sufficient, good people need other (external) things apart from their goodness. For that reason, while Aristotle shows every sign of supposing that there may be plenty of good people around, or at least that goodness is achievable by human beings, he is less certain that many people achieve happiness and self-sufficiency.⁵⁹ For the Socrates of the *Lysis*, by contrast, goodness and – maximum, practicable – self-sufficiency⁶⁰ seem to be made to go together.

The most that one might hold against Socrates is that he is begging the question, by what an Aristotelian could not help thinking of as a shifting of the question – without notice – from ideal self-sufficiency to this 'practicable' self-sufficiency, i.e. the maximum of self-sufficiency attainable by one starting from where one is now. However Socrates – as depicted here, at any rate – might reasonably retort that, given that he has not brought up the conception of ideal happiness at all, there has been no shifting of questions.

⁵⁸ That is, in that the good are said to be *ipso facto* self-sufficient. For more on this arresting view – that the good person is the person who *possesses* the good to the maximum possible in the circumstances – see Chapter 11, n. 24 below, where a surprising departure from the modern treatment of 'good of its kind' is proposed.

⁵⁹ See e.g. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.10.

⁶⁰ For the important qualification (*maximum, practicable* self-sufficiency), see §§1 and 4 above. An example of a good, self-sufficient, being can be found in Plato's *Timaeus*, at 34B: the divine cosmos, 'whose very excellence enables it to keep its own company without requiring anything else. For its knowledge of and friendship to itself is enough (*gnōrimon de kai philon hikanōs auton hautōi*)' (tr. Zeyl). But human beings are not gods; human beings generally are lovers and desirers. See 222D5–6, and Chapter 5 below. So none of us will be self-sufficient, and none of us, then, will be good. Nor, for that matter, will any of us be *bad* – that is, as will be spelled out in 217A3–218C3, no one will be *terminally* bad, which would prevent us from desiring wisdom. All of us desire, and all of us are neither good nor bad.

6 215C3–216B9

The result reached, in any case, is a negative one: the final defeat of the poets' (poet's) proposal that it is likeness that produces *philia*. (But in 216C–217A, a new hypothesis will arise, so far unforeseen, from the ashes of 214A–E and 215C–216B together.) Now Socrates proposes that he and Lysis have been misled:

'Just look and see, Lysis, how we are being led astray! Is it even that there's a way we're being deceived *completely*?'⁶¹

'How so?' he said.

'There was a time once when I heard someone 215C5 saying – and I'm just now recalling it – that as for like [neuter singular] in relation to like [neuter singular], and the good [masculine plural] in relation to the good [masculine plural], they were supremely hostile to each other; and moreover he called in Hesiod as witness, saying that in fact⁶² "Potter is angry with potter, and singer with singer,"⁶³ 215DI And beggar with beggar" – and for all other cases too, then (*dē*), he said, it must necessarily be as in these that it is most of all the things that are most alike that are most filled with jealousy and rivalry towards each other, while the things that are most unlike must be filled with friendship (*philia*): he said that the 215D5 poor person must necessarily⁶³ be friend (*philos*) to the rich and the weak to the strong for the sake of getting their aid,⁶⁴ and the ill person to the doctor, and that every person, in fact, who lacks knowledge must prize (*agapan*) the one who possesses it, and love (*philein*) him. 215E1 And moreover he sallied out in what he said in even grander style, saying that in fact so far from its being the case that like was friend to like, it was precisely the opposite of that: it was what was most opposed that was most of all friend to what was most opposed to it. For, he said, what each 215E5 thing desires is that sort of thing, not what is like it: dry desires the wet, cold hot, bitter sweet, sharp dull, empty – filling, while the full, for its part, desires emptying, and so with the rest, along the same lines. For that which is opposed is nourishment to what is opposed to it; for what is like would derive no 216AI benefit (*ouden an apolausai*) from like. And I can tell you, my friend (*hetairos*), he also seemed to me a smart (*komplos*) person, when he was saying this; for he spoke well. What about you two –' I said: 'how does he seem to do, in the view of the two of you, in what he says?'

⁶¹ That is, whatever we might have thought; the sense of *ara* here is something like 'from the speaker's/writer's perspective'; 'the speaker/writer concludes'.

⁶² Singer is certainly out of tune with singer in the present context in the *Lysis* (Hesiod here backs a different view from Homer's in 214A). The Hesiodic lines are from the *Works and Days* (25–6).

⁶³ The verb *anankazesthai* here in D5 ultimately has the same effect as the *anankaion einai* (translated in identical fashion) in D2 (see LSJ s.v. *anankazein*): if it is a law of nature (roughly) that opposites are *phila* to opposites, then any opposite will, as it were, be 'forced' by that law to be 'friend' to its opposite.

⁶⁴ The word is *epikouria*, as at 215A2; the unnamed speaker has a lot in common with Socrates' point of view (though there will be crucial differences between them). Cf. 'for what is like would derive no benefit from like' in 215E9–216AI, and see below.

'Definitely well,' said Menexenus, 'or at any rate so it struck me, hearing it like that.' (215C3–216A4)

The speaker supposedly reported here represents a type,⁶⁵ someone with pretensions to be a cosmologist, or natural scientist (or at least with ambitions to present a cosmic theory of *philia*), who actually starts from the poets and thinks them to have sufficient authority to justify his highly general conclusions. When he does give 'evidence' of his own, it is couched in the language of metaphor, and so hardly distinguishable from what he claims to have got from Hesiod: dry 'desires' wet, and so on, opposite provides 'nourishment' to opposite, like (i.e. what has the same physical characteristics) 'derives no benefit from' like.⁶⁶ The speech represents another implicit attack on other, non-philosophical, ways of trying to think and talk about the world: not just the poets and the cosmologists, this time, but pseudo-scientists (who may not be so easily distinguishable from those who claim to be the real article: see e.g. that argument, quoted above, about the attraction of likes, attributed to Democritus); and also people who are only good at *talking*, and have nothing worth saying. ('Didn't he speak well?' But his whole edifice will fall down with a mere touch, in 216A4–B9.)

There is, however, more to the speech than this. The presence in the context of such types of pseudo-expertise – 'pseudo-', that is from Socrates' point of view⁶⁷ – is surely at least piquant, given that the speech itself uses as its central examples forms of what would commonly be accepted as *real* expertise, and indeed starts from these. After all, 'the good' in 215C6 ('as for like in relation to like, and the good in relation to the good, they [are] supremely hostile to each other') must apparently refer to experts like the potters with whom the two Hesiodic verses in C8–D1 begin – and the 'singers', i.e. the poets, who are of course experts from the speaker's perspective, if they have the kind of authority he attributes to them. Beggars

⁶⁵ Someone of the same type is Eryximachus in the *Symposium*; indeed some of the things Eryximachus says sound remarkably like some of the things put into the mouth of the unnamed speaker here in the *Lysis* (see especially *Symp.* 186D–E), though with different and more complex twist. Even apart from the general closeness of the *Lysis* to the *Symposium* (see Epilogue below), some sort of intertextual reference seems more than on the cards, but it is not easy to pin down exactly what it is, or what its function is. (It would be nice and neat if Eryximachus actually *were* the speaker of the *Lysis*; sadly, from this point of view, his thesis – i.e. the one Plato attributes to him – is significantly different.)

⁶⁶ But here there is also a resemblance to Socrates' own argument at 214E4–215A2 (see n. 64 above).

⁶⁷ If we are in any doubt about Socrates' position on such forms of intellectual activity, what follows in 216C1 ff. will suffice to remove it (insofar as it shows Socrates, and Lysis, and philosophy, as able to outdo them, ostensibly with a bit of help from above). 'Antilogic' will be quietly added to the list of pseudo-expertises at 216A–B. On the (close) relationship of 'antilogic' to eristics, see Kerferd 1981, esp. 62–3; if there is a difference, it is unlikely to have any great consequences for the present context. For a more theoretical take on pseudo-expertises, see Penner 1987.

(D1), though perhaps specialists, are not experts; but they have their counterparts, in the succeeding list of examples of those who actually are *philoī*, ‘friends’ (so the speaker claims), in the poor in relation to the rich, the weak in relation to the strong. Then once again we go back to kinds of expertise: the ill person in relation to the doctor, and ‘every person, in fact, who lacks knowledge [in relation to] the one who possesses it’ (D7).

All in all, the unnamed person’s speech turns out to fit remarkably well into the whole argumentative context (which, incidentally, suggests that he, and it, are invented). Not only does it serve to bring in the opposite/opposite thesis, perhaps the obvious next destination after the rejection of like/like;⁶⁸ it also allows Socrates unobtrusively to reintroduce that earlier connection between goodness and *expertise*.⁶⁹ ‘And the good in relation to the good’ in 215C6 is likely to be meant to be Socrates’ own gloss (“like is supremely hostile to like” – so that ‘good will be to good’); and ‘every person, in fact, who lacks knowledge must prize the one who possesses it, and love him’ (D7) is an idea that Socrates will not only take over but will – as we shall see – treat as a central plank of his own positive treatment of *philia*. That is, ‘friendship’ based on expertise or wisdom, which played a central role in the opening conversation with Lysis (207D–210D), will play an equally central one in the long argument that begins after 216C1; from 217A, the case of the ill person and the doctor is in fact used as the central example. The speech is thus in many respects continuous with, and forms an organic part of, its surrounding context.⁷⁰ When all is said and done, in fact, the speaker does pretty well, apart from the small matters of his lack of proper method and his penchant for cosmic speculation; he just shouldn’t have said that things love each other ‘in respect to their opposition’ – as Socrates finally expresses the theory at 216B6–7⁷¹ – nor, as we shall see, should he

⁶⁸ Opposite/opposite (most opposed/most opposed), after all, is the extreme case of unlike/unlike (cf. n. 71 below).

⁶⁹ Cf. nn. 66, 64 above.

⁷⁰ That is, even apart from its role in helping to produce Socrates’ new thesis at 216C2–3: see Chapter 5 below.

⁷¹ There are several other versions in which Socrates reports the theory, all involving superlatives: ‘... the things that are most unlike must be filled with friendship (*philia*)’ (215D4); ‘it was what was most opposed that was most of all *philon* to what was most opposed to it’ (E3–4); ‘it is opposite to opposite that is most of all *philon*’ (216A4–5, where the ‘most of all’, *malista*, is placed in between ‘opposite to opposite’ and *philon*, so just possibly qualifying all three adjectives). But given 216B6–7 (‘if it really were the case that a thing is *philon* to another thing, *with respect to their opposition*’, *kata tēn enantiotēta*, i.e. just because they are opposites), what Socrates’ speaker has in mind is a scale running from most like and most hostile (215C6, D2–3) to most opposed and most *philon*, with hostile turning to *philon* in between and ascending degrees of hostility and ‘friendship’ as one moves in one direction and the other (so leaving likeness what makes for hostility, being opposed what makes for ‘friendship’).

have treated the layman and the expert, or the person with knowledge and the person without it, as opposites.

That the speaker was wrong to derive *philia* from oppositeness, Socrates is able to show quickly and easily, in the following passage:

‘Are we in that case to assert that it is opposite to opposite that is most 216A5 of all friends (*philon*)?’

‘Yes, certainly.’

‘Hold on,’ I said. ‘Isn’t that something bizarre (*allokoton*), Menexenus? And won’t those super-wise (*passophoi*) individuals, the antilogicians, leap on us delightedly and ask us whether 216B1 enmity (*echthra*) is something that’s most opposed to friendship? What shall we reply to them? Or mustn’t we necessarily agree that what they say is true?’

‘Necessarily we must.’

“So,” they’ll say, “is enemy (*echthron*) friend to friend, or friend friend to enemy?”⁷²

‘Neither is so,’ he said.

“But is the just (a) friend to the unjust, or the 216B5 self-controlled to the licentious, or the good to the bad?”

‘It doesn’t seem to me it’d be like that.’

‘And yet,’⁷³ I said, ‘if it really were the case that a thing is friend to its friend⁷⁴ with respect to their opposition, these too will necessarily be *phila*.’

‘Necessarily.’

‘In that case neither is like friend to like⁷⁵ nor opposite to opposite.’

‘It seems not.’ (216A4–B9)

What Socrates claims the ‘antilogicians’ will say is also neither more nor less than *he* would say. The way he puts it, and the way he goes on to profit, constructively and philosophically, from the point he says they would

⁷² ‘Enemy’ and ‘friend’ in the Greek are all neuters (‘is the *echthron philon* to the *philon*, or the *philon* (*philon*) to the *echthron*?’); similarly with all the terms in Socrates’ next contribution. We should notice that the argument here is emphatically not the same as the argument of 213A–B, where we were banned from saying that enemy was *friend* to friend. The point now is about the impossibility of enemy being (necessarily) friend to enemy just insofar as he is enemy.

⁷³ There is nothing much to indicate that the imagined conversation with the ‘antilogicians’ has finished at this point, but their stock-in-trade, if they represent a species of eristics (n. 67 above), is drawing out bizarre consequences, not the sort of wry philosophical reflection that seems to be in question in ‘And yet . . .’.

⁷⁴ Reading *tōi philiōi philon* in B7 (with *tōi* accented); the text printed by Burnet (OCT) would give ‘if it were really the case that a thing is *philon* to (another) thing with respect to its opposition’. It is hard to choose between the two options on any grounds, textual or otherwise, but to our minds the balance is just tipped by the fact that the text as we read and translate it would remind Lysis that in any case of *philia* both subject and object ought to be *phila* – with no implication, even so, that they will be *alike* (‘In that case neither is like friend to like . . . , B8).

⁷⁵ Socrates is here obviously picking up the conclusion of 214A–215C, not claiming that it follows from the argument he has just provided.

make,⁷⁶ underlines the distinction – one we have said forms part of the background to the whole context – between philosophy and other kinds of activity. (*Philosophy goes places*, or tries to; antilogicians and others are not interested in making progress, only in winning, or some other goal that has nothing in it to attract the philosopher – the lover of wisdom.) Another of these non-philosophical enterprises may perhaps have been brought into the frame by the way Menexenus responds, at 216A3, to Socrates' question 'how does he seem to do, in the view of the two of you, in what he says?' The question is more than likely to be about the *content* of the speech: to say that someone 'speaks well', *eu legei*, is a standard way of saying that they are getting something right. But Menexenus' response, 'Definitely well . . . or at any rate so it struck me, hearing it like that,' perhaps suggests a reaction as much to the speaker's rhetorical skills as to the content of what he said; or, better, *first* to his rhetorical skills, then, as he remembers himself, to the content ('but I'd better be careful; I've been caught out before?').

However that may be, Socrates has gently corrected Menexenus by means of another invented conversation, with both of them, the older as well as the younger, as the butt of the antilogicians' objection. So that smart speaker wasn't so smart after all, and the opposite/opposite thesis falls just like its like/like counterpart. For just a fleeting moment, we seem to be left in a genuine impasse: 'neither is like friend to like nor opposite to opposite', 216B8–9, 'despite what our expert sources say; so just what *can* be *philon*?' But Socrates has something up his sleeve. And that something will be the point of departure for a new and sustained piece of argument that will take us through almost to the end of the dialogue.

⁷⁶ Cf. nn. 67, 73 above.

CHAPTER 5

216CI–221D6: *what it is that loves, what it really loves, and why*

I 216CI–217A2

216CI ‘But let’s go on and consider this too, whether the friend¹ isn’t perhaps eluding us to a still greater extent (*et i mallon*), in truth being none of these things, but [sc. rather] what is neither good nor bad simply, perhaps [*houtō pote?*], becoming friend of the good.’²

‘How do you mean?’ [Menexenus] said.

‘Zeus!’ I said. ‘I don’t **216C5** know – I’m dizzy myself at the impasse in [i.e. the *aporia* of] the argument, and it looks as if, as the old proverb goes, “the beautiful is friend (*philon*)”. At any rate it seems like something soft and smooth and slippery; **216D1** which is actually why, perhaps, it is easily slipping through our fingers and getting away from us, that is, because it’s the sort of thing that does that. For I say that the good is beautiful;³ what about you – don’t you think so?’

¹ See Chapter 4, n. 4 above. ‘The friend’ here is *to philon*, neuter; and the rest of 216CI–217A2 will continue to operate with neuters: *to mēte agathon mēte kakon*, ‘the neither good nor bad’ (216D4), and so on.

² This is an extraordinarily difficult sentence, but the translation offered currently looks the most defensible. The most important problems lie in the words *houtō pote*, which hardly anyone seems to have tried seriously to explain. LSJ (s.v. *houtōs*, A.IV) appears to treat the phrase here – and we have so far found no parallel – as a version of *houtōs/houtō ge* in the sense of ‘just like that’, i.e. (in this context) without the need to bring in other factors (?); we propose to accept that, though we suggest in addition, hesitantly, that the *pote* might have the effect of adding a note of uncertainty. (The adverb *pote* cannot stand, as it usually does, for ‘from time to time’, as 216E7–217A2 confirms: Socrates is talking about what *to philon* always is, not what it sometimes is.) As for *gignomenon* (‘becomes’ in the translation), cf. 216D7–217A2, with 212A5–6: Socrates’ quest is still to find out how one person becomes *philos*, ‘friend’, to, another. (One is certainly tempted to leave out the *et i mallon*, ‘to a still greater extent’, in c1, which is not universally present in the manuscripts: at least the first part of the sentence would run more smoothly without it, but on the other hand smoothness is not obviously the primary criterion in this context.)

³ Socrates’ argument (or ‘argument’: see below) here seems to go something like this: ‘the way the *philon* is eluding us (*lanthanei*, c1) suggests that the *philon* is actually the *beautiful* (the *kalon*), because that’s something that always slips through our fingers – the *philon*, from our experience so far, seems to be just as “soft and smooth and slippery”. But anyway that’s consistent with c2–3, i.e. what I said about the neither good nor bad becoming friend of the good, because I think the *good* is *beautiful*.’ This hardly counts as an argument; Socrates seems just to want to get the *beautiful* in somewhere, and uses the excuse of his ‘dizzy’ state (more evidence, if that were needed, that he knows where

'I do.'

'Then I say – and here I'm speaking as a prophet⁴ – that it's the neither good nor bad that's friend of the beautiful and good; 216D5 and as for the things with a view to which I utter my prophecy,⁵ I'll tell you what they are. It seems to me that it's as if there are some three kinds of things, the good, the bad, and the neither good nor bad; what about you?'

'To me too,' he said.

'And that neither is the good friend to the good, nor the bad to the bad, nor the good 216E1 to the bad, just as the previous discussion (*logos*) too stopped us from saying; it remains, then (*dē*), if indeed anything is friend to anything, that the neither good nor bad should be friend either of the good or of what is of the same sort as itself. For I don't suppose that anything would become friend to [*philon* to] the bad.'

216E5 'True.'

'But neither would like become friend to like – we said so just now,⁷ didn't we?'

'Yes.'

'In that case what is of the same sort as the neither good nor bad won't be friend to the neither good nor bad.'

'It doesn't appear so.'

'In that case it turns out 217A1 that there's one thing, alone, to which one thing, alone, becomes friend: the neither good nor bad becomes friend to the good.'

'Necessarily, it seems.' (216CI–217A2)

This extraordinary passage marks a turning point in the discussion, when Socrates produces a new thesis which is at least partly his own (though he pretends that it has come to him from outside, or above: 'I'm a kind of prophet'). This thesis will form the starting-point for the last, longest, and

he is going in the argument proper). Lombardo in the Hackett translation prefers 'slides and sinks into us' for *diolisthainei kai diaduetai hēmas* in D1 ('is . . . slipping through our fingers and getting away from us' in our version); but (a) it is not clear that such a translation would be licensed by our other evidence, little though it is, about the uses of the two Greek verbs in question, and (b) the proverb about the beautiful (and so the character of the beautiful) *appears* to be introduced to explain Socrates' 'dizziness' ('I'm dizzy, and it looks as if . . .').

⁴ Or 'prophesying', *apomanteuomenos*.

⁵ More literally, '(as for) the things in relation to which I prophesy (*manteuomat*)'.

⁶ That the *good* should become friend to the *bad* has of course already been ruled out (216B5), as has the *bad*'s becoming friend of the *bad*, on the grounds that the loved object must always be useful or beneficial. (As we explain elsewhere, Socrates does not here address the case of the *bad* loving the *good* – though his reasons for thinking this also is not a possible case will emerge later in the dialogue.)

On '*philon* to'/'*philon* of': we note here that while it may be true that, in ordinary Greek, 'x is *philos* of y' will tend to be read as a matter of x's loving y, while 'x is *philos* to y' will be read as a matter of y's loving x, the *Lysis* pays little or no heed to the idiom. Given 217A1–2 (which has the neither good nor bad as friend – subject – to the good – object), it is quite clear that 'friend to' can, and often must, be read as exactly the same as 'friend of' as we find it at 216C3, D3–4. In the present context there is no doubt that Socrates is often using 'x is *philon* to y' for x loves y.

⁷ 214E5–215A4.

in some ways most interesting arguments of the dialogue, stretching all the way from 217A3 to 221E and beyond. But as will be obvious even at first reading, the passage has more than a simple linking function; it has riches, or at any rate mysteries, of its own.

It will probably be easiest to discuss it in two parts: 216CI–D4, and 216D5–217A2.

(i) 216CI–D4

If Socrates is ‘dizzy’ with perplexity (c5), he at the same time thinks he has a way out. Indeed he announces the way out even before claiming to be dizzy, which he does only in response to Menexenus’ asking what his new proposal means. ‘Zeus! . . . I don’t know – I’m dizzy myself . . .’ – and because of his confused state, brought on by the slipperiness of the quarry (‘the friend’), he claims that he’s just making an inspired guess (‘prophesying’, D3, 5).⁸ But he has grounds for this ‘guess’ (‘as for the things with a view to which I utter my prophecy . . .’, D5), or he can work some out. It is as if his first statement of the new thesis, in c2–3 (that ‘the friend’ is a matter of ‘what is neither good nor bad . . . becoming friend of the good’), came to him out of the blue, like any actual ‘prophecy’. But if there are ‘things [other than divine ones] with a view to which’ he makes it, then it also *isn’t* like a prophecy, and isn’t really like an inspired guess either.

Why then does he speak of ‘prophecy’? The starting-point seems to be Socrates’ – sincere – claim that he is ‘useless’ (204B–C), knows nothing: then, on the basis of this, Plato allows him to adopt the pose that he himself contributes nothing of his own even to the inquiries that he undertakes jointly with others. So it must be some kind of ‘prophecy’.

But in fact his new thesis, about the neither good nor bad loving the good, has *grounds*. These grounds, as Socrates indicates with his ‘just as the previous discussion too stopped us from saying . . .’ (216E1), were thrown up by the discussion of the poets and cosmologists (213E–216B), which, he goes on to suggest, gives him more or less what he needs to reject all the alternative possibilities (216D5–E7) – though in fact, as we have noted, ‘bad loves good’ is not formally rejected. But one thing that has not been prepared for is that new, third, category of the *neither good nor bad*, which is first – and suddenly – introduced by c2–3. That the good should be there

⁸ ‘Making an inspired guess’ is probably just what *apomanteuesthai/manteuesthai* amounts to in the present context; the contrast is with actually *knowing* (c4–5). (There is no necessary reference to the future, as with the English ‘prophecy’; cf. Chaerophon’s visit to the oracle, to put a question about the present – the verb used is actually *manteuesthai* – at *Apology* 21A.)

in object position, i.e. as object of *philein*, is inevitable after the discussion of the poets and cosmologists in 213E–216B,⁹ but the neither good nor bad comes in from nowhere: not from Lysis, not from Menexenus, not from the poets. So it comes from the gods (it's a 'prophecy').¹⁰ But the fiction is wholly transparent, since Menexenus immediately accepts the third category when it is put to him (216D7), as anyone might, and once Socrates has that, he has (more or less) everything he needs. If he is given this third category, plus 'the previous discussion' (plus a little bit more),¹¹ *philia* can only have the neither good nor bad on the subject side and the good on the object side.¹²

But Socrates *is* still pretending to have got this suggestion of his by divine inspiration, and he introduces the new account hesitantly:¹³ hence his disturbed syntax in 216CI–3, then his extended reflection on the elusiveness of 'the friend' – but that point itself has, or acquires, its own motivation, insofar as it allows him to bring in the beautiful, *to kalon*, and so to offer an expanded version of the original proposal in C2–3: it isn't just a matter of the good but of *the beautiful and good* being *philon* to the neither good nor bad (216D3–4).¹⁴ Now as it happens, little or nothing will be made of this expansion; indeed it is dropped in the very next formulation of the proposal, at 216E7–217A2. Why, then, does Plato bother to have Socrates make it in the first place? Part of the reason will be just that it provides a means to drawing out the point about the slipperiness of 'the friend'. But that cannot be the whole reason, since there were surely plenty of other, more obvious, ways of doing *that*. The most important motive for Socrates' bringing in the beautiful is indicated by that straight assertion of his at D2, '(For) I say that the good is beautiful.' One might suppose here that he was saying that everything good is beautiful, while still allowing that there

⁹ And especially, of course, after 214E2–215C2, from which it becomes clear that there is no friendship where there is no benefit to be gained.

¹⁰ But as everyone knows, prophetic utterances are themselves slippery, and may need interpretation (compare the 'riddling' of the Delphic oracle in the *Apology*, cited in Chapter 4, n. 34 above); in a Socratic context, human utterances still more.

¹¹ See below.

¹² To recap: what he has got from 207–10 is that happiness involves knowledge, and that for person *x* to love person *y* is to want him or her to have knowledge; from 212–13, that when *x* loves *y*, none of the usual candidates for *x*, *y*, or both is the *philon*. Probably some other thing is the *philon*. And now, from 214–16, we have learned that this other thing will be the good. The specification of the *subject* is plainly what is new and important in the present passage; that, plus the fact that Socrates would (without his disguise as 'prophet') be setting himself up in competition with those 'fathers of wisdom', the poets (204A1), helps to explain why the thesis of 216C2–3 is introduced in so elaborate and roundabout a way.

¹³ Or is it no more than a pretended hesitation?

¹⁴ For this combination see 205E6, 207A3, with Chapter 1, nn. 21 and 30 above; further below.

were some beautiful things that were not also good. However the context as a whole plainly implies that he is actually proposing to *identify* the good and the beautiful. That he wants nothing less than this is shown not only by 216E7–217A2 (which gives the result of the present stretch of discussion, without mentioning the beautiful), but by the fact that, from then on, he treats the object of love exclusively in terms of the good; for, of course, if anything other than identity were in question, it would still be possible for us to love things either because they are good, or because they are beautiful. What Socrates intends is apparently that beauty will *reside in* goodness.¹⁵ In short, according to his view there will be only one object of love, and not two.¹⁶ And this is of absolutely central importance, not just in itself,

¹⁵ Menexenus, one supposes, will have little inkling that he's agreeing with all of this (d2–3: 'For I say that the good is beautiful; what about you – don't you think so?' 'I do'); once again, the interlocutors are working at different levels of understanding. One might perhaps object that in this case 'the good is beautiful' oughtn't to be treated as a premiss. But in fact all that Socrates is doing is stating his view; he is not claiming to be providing an argument for the revised proposal at 216D3–4. The only question then is why Socrates bothers at all to ask Menexenus what he thinks; or is the important thing that he offers him the chance to reject his view, whether or not he takes that chance?

¹⁶ An Aristotelian might well wonder why pleasure is not mentioned as another possible object of love (see Epilogue); Socrates seems silently to include that too within the good. That he simply ignores it seems unlikely, given that he is about to begin talking specifically about desires, *epithumiai* (see esp. 220E–221C), passing seamlessly on to talk about these from talk about friendship, *philia*; in ordinary language *epithumia* is – to go by the *Charmides* (167E) – precisely that species of desire that aims at pleasure. Not for nothing does Plato in the *Republic* name the 'appetitive part' of the soul, i.e. the 'part' that is the source of desires for food, drink and sex, not to mention myriad more monstrous cravings, the *epithumētikon* ('the [part] that *epithumei*'). But let it be clear that we are not suggesting that *epithumia* in the *Lysis* is ever denied to be of/for the good (as it is denied to be in *Republic* IV, 437D–439B). That *epithumia* is not and cannot be of/for the good is a conclusion often drawn from the *Charmides* passage. But if so, we could also conclude, on the basis of the same context in the *Charmides*, that neither wish (*boulēsis*) nor desire (*epithumia*) could be for the beautiful, since in the same breath that Socrates aligns *epithumia* with pleasure, he aligns *boulēsis* with the good and *eros* with the beautiful. And there is no need to mention the fact that even in the *Republic*, *epithumia* is used for rational desires – sc. desires for the good: see e.g. IX, 580D8, with 580D10–581A1. This linguistic usage is in fact Socrates' reason for calling the third part of the soul the 'money-making' (*philochrēmaton, philokerdes*) part rather than the *epithumētikon*: *Republic* IX, 581A. It is not called the 'money-making' part because the third part aims at money (and is therefore a faculty that reasons about means to ends, money being intrinsically a means to the things that money buys) – even though, with depressing frequency, this is precisely what scholars claim, and have indeed made almost into a commonplace. That is not the point at all. That anyone should have supposed so can only be the result of carelessly reading what is in the text. The point in the text is that some other name is necessary for the third part because 'appetitive' doesn't get what is distinctive of the third part – 'appetite', *epithumia*, being also used for rational desires (as in the passages mentioned just above). What Socrates says is that this third part is called the 'money-making' part because it is money with which we purchase what the third part desires. This precisely does not say that the third part desires money. The connection with money is incidental (it is just that a universal connection of the word *epithumia* with irrational desires is not available). This being so, we may not use this passage in order to infer that the third part does means-end reasoning. The third part does not do means-end reasoning. At any rate this passage supplies zero evidence that it does do any such reasoning.

but because the whole dialogue began in a context dominated by the idea of love specifically of (*Lysis'*, physical) *beauty*. One of the effects, then, of 216CI–D4 is to tie that context in to the larger discussion of ‘love’, and vice versa.¹⁷ If Hippothales loves *Lysis*,¹⁸ then – so far as the argument goes – Hippothales must be neither good nor bad, and *Lysis* must somehow be good for Hippothales.

All of this is accomplished with what can only be described as a poetic flourish. To reproduce the passage (216C5–D2):

‘... I’m dizzy myself at the impasse in the argument, and it looks as if, as the old proverb goes, “the beautiful is friend”. At any rate it seems like something soft and smooth and slippery; which is actually why, perhaps, it is easily slipping through our fingers and getting away from us, that is, because it’s the sort of thing that does that. For I say that the good is beautiful ...’

The ‘conversation’ with the poets (see on 214B5 in Chapter 4 above) has ended with their theses being rejected, and Socrates has put forward a replacement thesis of his own (*we* know it is his); now, even as he supplants the poets’ authority, he momentarily *becomes* a poet, grasping after the same prey that has eluded them. But that poetic turn¹⁹ is immediately followed by an example of the real Socratic medium: argument.²⁰

(ii) 216D5–217A2

‘... and as for the things with a view to which I utter my prophecy, I’ll tell you what they are. It seems to me that it’s as if there are some three kinds of things, the good, the bad, and the neither good nor bad; what about you?’

¹⁷ One should probably remember that the Greek *kalos* may stand not just for what is beautiful, but also for what is fine, noble or admirable (see references in n. 14 above); and it is certain that Socrates’ notion of the good as object of love, here in the *Lysis*, is sufficiently generous to absorb the fine and the admirable as well as the beautiful (there is at any rate nothing *selfish* about it: cf. e.g. n. 12 above on the lesson of *Lysis* 207–10). But beauty seems to be what is most obviously at issue in the present context.

¹⁸ Whether ‘loves’ is a matter of *eran* or *philein* will now evidently be a matter of indifference, at least in this context: see e.g. n. 16 above.

¹⁹ The conceit is not so distantly related to some of the things the poet Agathon says about Love, Eros (figured as the beautiful beloved), in the *Symposium*: see especially 195D–196D, and our – Penner and Rowe’s – Epilogue.

²⁰ One of us (Rowe) originally wanted to claim that 216C–217A as a whole centred on Socrates’ mock adoption of the poet’s staff, with the ‘prophecy’ too as part of the ironic reference. But he was rightly persuaded out of this by a fruitful discussion at King’s College London in early 2002 (the process of conversion was completed by Penner). At King’s, Ursula Coope, Verity Harte, Richard Janko and M. M. McCabe in particular contributed to several changes of mind on what is, by any account, an unusually rich and suggestive passage, even by Plato’s unusual standards.

‘To me too,’ he said.

‘And that neither is the good friend to the good, nor the bad to the bad, nor the good to the bad, just as the previous discussion too stopped us from saying; it remains, then, if indeed anything is friend to anything, that the neither good nor bad should be friend either of the good or of what is of the same sort as itself. For I don’t suppose that anything would become friend to the bad.’

‘True.’

‘But neither would like become friend to like – we said so just now, didn’t we?’

‘Yes.’

‘In that case what is of the same sort as the neither good nor bad won’t be friend to the neither good nor bad.’²¹

‘It doesn’t appear so.’

‘In that case it turns out that there’s one thing, alone, to which one thing, alone, becomes friend: the neither good nor bad becomes friend to the good.’

‘Necessarily, it seems.’

So: it’s not good that’s friend to good, nor bad to bad, nor good to bad (216D7–E1); if one brings in the neither-good-nor-bad, then, and leaves out the option that that – the neither-good-nor-bad – might be friend to the bad (‘For I don’t suppose that anything would become friend to the bad,’ E4), either the neither-good-nor-bad will be friend of the good, or it will be friend of the neither-good-nor-bad – but we ruled out that like was friend to like, so all that remains is that neither good nor bad should be friend of the good.

This raises three immediate problems: two – we think – not too serious, the third more substantial.

The first problem will have a familiar ring after our discussions in Chapter 4 above (see §§1, 4). What was ruled out was only that people/things like in all respects could be friends to others like them in all respects. In that case, when he rules out the neither-good-nor-bad’s being friend to the neither-good-nor-bad, Socrates must be presupposing that the neither-good-nor-bad x must not only share his neither-good-nor-badness with the neither-good-nor-bad y , but they must be like in other respects too. He has no *general* argument, as we saw in Chapter 4, for ruling out ‘like loves like’. It will nonetheless be true that the neither-good-nor-bad has nothing to offer the neither-good-nor-bad ‘in respect of his neither-good-nor-badness; and while he might have some ‘help’ (215E6) to offer in some other respect, such help will in fact count as nothing in terms of the theory

²¹ For the inconclusiveness of this claim, given the inconclusiveness of the refutation of like loving like, see Chapter 4, §4 above, esp. nn. 32, 43 with n. 46 – though we have insisted that the argument on which Socrates *now* embarks (and the account of the good it will bring with it) renders the inconclusiveness venial.

which Socrates has in mind (and which will come rather more clearly into view in the course of the present chapter). So we are not ourselves inclined to worry unduly if a corner is cut here.

Now for the second of our three problems: we might pause – if only for a moment – to wonder why, if the only live possibilities that remain after 216D7–EI ('... it remains, then ...') are the cases with the neither-good-nor-bad in subject position, only three out of the four possible cases not involving the neither-good-nor-bad are actually mentioned as ruled out in D7–EI. Or is it because 'nor [is] the good [friend] to the bad' is meant to cover two cases: bad loving good, and good loving bad?

But then the third and more substantial question is: why *should* Socrates discard the case of bad (subject) to good (object)? Why shouldn't the bad be *philon* of, (let's say) desire, the good? (The equation of *philia* and desire, *epithumia*, will soon be made by Socrates himself: see 217E8–9 for the first indubitable instance.) What else would they desire? Menexenus has, certainly, just agreed that good isn't *philon* to bad (216B5), but on the face of it that hardly represents evidence of a high order; in any case Socrates' point there was just that if *being opposite* was what made people/things *philoī/a*, then the very fact that *x* was good and *y* bad would make them *phila*. However 216B by itself suggests that Socrates thinks it obvious that bad *can't* be *philon* to (love) good; so too²² 214D6–7, 'the bad person never enters into true friendship either to good or to bad' – compare 217C1–2 'for we said before that it was *impossible* for bad [subject] to be *philon* to good [object]', where the backward reference can only be to 214D or 216B, or a combination of the two. It is no more possible, the latter passage suggests, for good to be *philon* to bad than it is for *echthron* ('enemy') to be *philon* to *philon*, or just to unjust, or self-controlled to licentious – the three cases preceding good/bad in 216B4–5.

But why? To the extent that Socrates seems not to provide any backing for the claim, his argument will be incomplete, and the claim to a kind of prophetic power might have a double edge.²³ However he *will* offer an argument later on, to the effect that anything bad will in fact be deprived of desire/love for the good; so e.g. (in fact his prime example) anyone who became *completely and utterly ignorant*, rather than just lacking knowledge, would never love wisdom/do philosophy.²⁴ So the most serious charge we

²² See Chapter 4 above, n. 4.

²³ Something like this point was made forcefully in discussion by Verity Harte and Ursula Coope (see n. 20 above).

²⁴ 217B–218B. But if the bad don't desire the good, and all desire is for the good, as Socrates is already proposing, then they don't desire at all. If it's hard to think of humans that don't have any desires, then there won't be any bad people around (we shall argue *this* point later). So the objection is irrelevant in any case.

can level at Socrates is, that he is anticipating a conclusion he will only argue for later – something which, on our analysis, he has in any case done two or three times before (see Chapters 3 and 4 above), and which here too will be venial, if he will indeed argue for it (and if it happens to be true).²⁵ And it will still hold that ‘the previous discussion too stopped us from saying’ (216EI) that bad loved good, even if it only assumed it instead of arguing for it (so first at 214D6–7). In short, it simply suits Socrates’ strategy – Plato’s strategy for Socrates – to delay his argument for discarding the possibility that the bad might love the good. That Menexenus and Lysis make no trouble for him on the point need not be put down either to lack of attention or acuity, or to mere unscrupulousness on the part of the author (i.e. to its *just* suiting him not to have them raise it); they might, for example, be blinded by the thought that bad *people*, at any rate, won’t usually be friends to good *people*.²⁶

In any case, insofar as he assumes something he *will* argue for, and fails to address a (poetic or cosmological) point of view that simply cannot imagine why the bad would love the good, Socrates leaves a gap. This gap precisely parallels another that we noted before – in relation to his use of self-sufficiency, and the Aristotelian disappointment many will feel that Socrates denies that the good are friends to the good just on the grounds that the good are self-sufficient. (See our discussion of self-sufficiency in Chapter 4, §§1 and 4 above.) However he now immediately begins the argumentation that will fill these gaps. By the time we reach the conclusion of this argumentation it will be clear that the only thing that will count as good – the ‘first friend’, the only real or true friend – is the ultimate good as measured by a strictly teleological, and hierarchical, conception of the objects of desire. No person, let alone ‘a good *person*’, will be the good.

2 217A3–221D6

So, ‘prophesies’ Socrates, ‘there’s one thing, alone, to which one thing, alone, becomes friend: the neither good nor bad becomes friend to the good’ (217AI–2). He now asks the two boys whether this – ‘what is now

²⁵ To the extent that we are dealing here with an anticipation, one might perhaps propose connecting that with Socrates’ claim to be ‘prophesying’. But from the run of the passage the claim seems to us (Penner and Rowe) specifically designed to account for the introduction of the neither good nor bad (see above), and so to have no reference to *prediction* (for which see e.g. *Euthyphro* 3C1–2).

²⁶ The fact is, in any case, that the boys *ought* to have resisted the proposal that bad aren’t friend to good, too (cf. n. 21 above), on the same grounds of inconclusiveness – inconclusiveness, at any rate to the kinds of people who are poets and cosmologists. (Similarly with the proposal that the good are self-sufficient: Chapter 4, n. 46 above.) But the argument coming up will fill in any gaps: see below.

being said’, ‘what we are now saying’ – is leading the three of them in the right sort of direction (A3–4). The next, and longest, part of the dialogue, down to (at least) 221D6, is essentially an extended answer to this question. The answer seems to be a qualified yes; but (to put it mildly) further clarification is needed. Socrates’ recovery from his ‘dizzy’ spell (216C5) is complete: for the whole of this section he is, as usual, the main person asking the questions – and he is also, more unusually, the main person giving answers. However he is not the sort of answerer who gives all and only true answers. On the contrary, in the next five or six Stephanus pages he goes down as many wrong paths as many of his interlocutors do in other dialogues. What we have here is still Socratic dialectic. The basic mix is still maintained, insofar as Socrates continues to make mistakes, correct them, set up paradoxes, and generally tease his audience – us, as well as Lysis and Menexenus – even while making progress with the project in hand.²⁷

Having said what it is that loves (the neither good nor bad) and what it is that it really loves (the good) – both to be further specified – Socrates now introduces the question of the *cause* of the neither-good-nor-bad’s loving the good. The issue of the cause of *philia* remains central in what follows (see especially 217A–B, 221B–D), though in two quite different modes: in one mode (217A–218C) before the good that is the true or real object of love has

²⁷ It is in fact Menexenus who appears to respond in most of this new section, even while Socrates is addressing the pair together: so in 217A3 and c3, with a single respondent marked at d1, and no apparent change in interlocutor since A2, when Menexenus was certainly speaking; 218C7–8 (both addressed), d1 (Menexenus responds); 219B5 (both addressed), c1 (single speaker at 219E4, with no change marked since Socrates last addressed Menexenus on his own at 218E2). Is it just that Menexenus is the more assertive of the two? (Contrast Lysis’ embarrassment at 213D, when he broke into the conversation between Socrates and Menexenus.) That Socrates generally seems to want to address both boys is perhaps consistent with his now more direct mode – he is addressing the *subject*, one might say, as much as he is addressing them. When he does address Menexenus exclusively, it tends to be because he is having trouble following (217D1 ff., 218D1 ff.), but there is no reason to suppose that Menexenus isn’t on these occasions acting as spokesman for the two of them. See further n. 41 below.

A more fundamental issue: one might wonder whether the whole section in question is not in danger of directly undermining the claim made on Plato’s behalf in n. 20 to Chapter 4 above, that ‘[d]ialogue . . . is the only way of making intellectual progress’; for (a) there is no real dialogue, insofar as the boys make no real contribution, (b) Socrates evidently makes progress, and (c) in a way he even *suspends* the discussion (on the account we have so far given of it) in order to make that progress. To this we respond that, while it must be conceded that the boys are rather less fully partners in the dialectic that follows, what follows *is* nonetheless dialectical to the hilt. It is a dialectic developed by Socrates by way of successive positions that he himself first espouses, then attacks: that the neither good nor bad, first, loves the good, then, second, loves the good because of the bad, then, third, loves the good for the sake of another good because of the bad, then, fourth, loves the other good for the sake of yet another good, then, fifth, . . . , then, sixth . . . It is still dialectic, even if the boys are just going along with Socrates. But will anyone suggest that they do wrong to do so? (Complaints about Socrates’ interlocutors’ not being genuine partners, and being too co-operative, ring truer when the views of Socrates they go along with are false.)

been identified as the ‘first friend’, in another mode after the ‘first friend’ has been identified. So we turn now to the question of causation – which will also help us in further specifying the neither-good-nor-bad that loves and the good that is loved. In short: why, because of what (*dia ti*: 217A5, 6, etc.), is one thing *philon* to another, whether as subject or as object? That is, now that we have apparently acquired an initial characterization of what stands on the subject and object sides, we need to know why subject is or becomes *philon*, ‘friend’, to object.²⁸ Once more there appears a perfect continuity, at a deep level, in the argument of the dialogue (see further below, on an even tighter connection between 217A3–218C3 and what has preceded).

The argument can be divided up into the following moves:

- A. Starting from the contrast between the healthy body that doesn’t need a doctor and the sick one that does, Socrates suggests that ‘friendship’, *philia*, occurs ‘because of the bad’ (in the case in question, the sickness), or more precisely because of the presence of the bad – so long as what it is that *philei* has not yet *become* bad, since in that case bad would be desiring good, which – it is taken for granted – cannot occur. It is no less necessary than before that the loving subject be, not bad (and not good either), but neither good nor bad. The (not yet incurably) sick body loves medical science (or the doctor) because of sickness. So: the neither good nor bad is ‘friend’, *philon*, of the good because of the presence of bad. (217A3–218C3)
- B. But Socrates has the ‘oddest of suspicions’ that this account is false. His next move is to add in a reference to what the *philon* subject loves the object *for* (‘for the sake of what’ = *tinos/tou heneka*). Here too the example used is that of the sick person, who is ‘friend of’ the doctor for the sake of (*heneka*) health: the ‘friendship’, *philia*, exists not just because of something but for the sake of something, and something that is itself *philon*. At the same time, the something because of (*dia*) which the *philia* exists, i.e. in this case the sickness, will be ‘inimical’ (*echthron*: *echthros*, of course, is the usual contrary of *philos*) in so far as it is bad. So now we have the result that what is *philon* is *philon* for the sake of (*heneka*) the *philon* because of (*dia*) the *echthron*.²⁹ (218C4–219B4)

²⁸ This is still the same sort of question that Socrates set up at 212A, ‘in what way one person becomes a friend of another’, but of course taken – as Socrates himself took it from the beginning – as a question about the nature of *philia* itself. Cf. Chapter 4, n. 1.

²⁹ Here (actually 219B3–4) is an example of Socrates’ deliberately presenting a paradox: the *philon* is *philon* because of the *echthron* – how so? How can ‘enmity’ be because of ‘friendship’? Yet the paradox is hardly more than verbal. Why shouldn’t the cause of love be the bad, i.e. the bad that needs to be

- c. But now if this is our account of the *philon*, we shall have to give the same account of the *philon* for the sake of which the original *philon* is *philon* (and so on), and since we can't go on for ever like this, we'll necessarily 'arrive at some beginning, which will no longer refer to another *philon*, but [sc. the process?] will come to that thing which is *philon* first of all, for the sake of which we say that the other things too, all of them, are *phila*' (219C6–D2). The truly *philon*, in that case, isn't *philon* for the sake of some (other) *philon*; and those so-called *phila* that are like that are not true *phila*. (219B5–220B5)
- d. So is it the case that the good is loved because of the bad? Does the good have no 'use' for us for its own sake (on its own, i.e. separately from its function of removing the bad), but only as a cure for bad – so that if there were no bad at all, the 'truly' *philon* wouldn't be *philon*? In fact, there would be desires (*epithumiai*) even in the absence of bad: hunger and thirst, for example; and in the real world there are, besides good desires (desires that turn out well, i.e. beneficially) and bad desires (ones that turn out badly or harmfully), desires that are neither good nor bad, i.e. desires of such a sort that we can still want their results to be, or to have been, not just neutral but good. So there will still be desire for good (desire to do better) in a world without bad. But there can't be desire without there being *philein*, and *phila*, so that the cause of *philia* can't be the bad after all: that part of the account, or the account that included that element, can be discarded as some sort of rubbish (*huthlos tis*, 221D5). (220B6–221C5)

[Interim explanatory note: with the bringing up of desires that are neither good nor bad – 'neutral' desires, we might call them, ones that turn out neither well nor badly – there becomes clear something that readers of, and listeners to, the dialogue will have been suspecting for a long time. This is that Socrates is inviting us to treat love (in the Greek mainly *philia*, but also *erōs*) and desire (*epithumia*) as the same thing.³⁰ Indeed, in A above he is already talking of them as such (217E6–9: see above).³¹ First, what we love we must need (esp. 215A4–C2); then the example of loving that

removed from the neither good nor bad to gain the good? So why is it so much as seen as paradoxical? In fact, the proposal that 'friendship' is caused by the presence of bad will be rejected, and is no doubt the main thing that is wrong with the conclusion of A; B is already beginning to provide the means for replacing it. But meanwhile B has thrown up a problem of its own, which will be addressed in C: if the *philon* is *philon* for the sake of the *philon*, won't this latter *philon* be *philon* for sake of some further *philon*, and so on? Thus even apart from the way Socrates chooses to put it, 'what is *philon* is *philon* for the sake of the *philon* because of the inimical' suggests upcoming complexities of two different kinds.

³⁰ Cf. nn. 16, 17 above; further, n. 44 below.

³¹ Also, given the text we propose to adopt, at 217C1.

is successively elaborated as the account of love in terms of the neither-good-nor-bad, on the one hand, and the good on the other (217A–219C; cf. 220C–D) is clearly an example of desire: the sick person needs, and so desires, the doctor because of the sickness he has and for the sake of the health he desires, and so forth.

What happens next is that *cause* undergoes its transformation from what we called just now its first mode to what we called its second mode. So, finally:]

e. What, then, *is* the cause of *philia*? Is it rather desire (*epithumia*) that makes things – subjects and objects – *phila*? ('Quite likely', says Menexenus: *Kinduneuei*.) (221C5–D6)

To mark a break in the argument here at 221D6 is probably artificial. But it is at any rate somewhere around here that the end-game or final act (as it were) of the dialogue begins, and that final part will certainly need to be considered separately from the present one. In what follows, broadly speaking we discuss in turn each of the five episodes into which 217A3–221D6 has been divided above.

A. 217A3–218C3: the cause of 'friendship', philia, as presence of bad (?)

(i) *Translation*

'So, you boys,' I said, 'is it also³² leading us in the right direction, what we're saying now? If at any rate we were to choose to consider the case of the body 217A5 in healthy condition, it hasn't any need of medical expertise, or of assistance (*ōphelia*);³³ for it's in sufficient condition, so that no one who's in a healthy condition is friend to doctor, because of his health. Right?'

'No one.'

'But the sick person *is*, I imagine, because of his sickness.'

'Obviously.'

217B1 'Sickness, then, is something bad (*kakon*), while medical expertise is something beneficial (*ōphelimon*) and good?'

'Yes.'

'Whereas (*de ge*) I imagine (*pou*) a body, just insofar as it is a body, is neither good nor bad.'

³² 'Also', i.e. – perhaps – as well as following from what has previously been agreed. ('Necessarily', said Menexenus at A2, but without much conviction, adding 'as it seems'.) Or is the function of the *kai* merely to put additional emphasis on the *kalos* ('So is it actually the *right* direction . . .?')? But perhaps this has much the same effect.

³³ The term was previously rendered as 'benefit', e.g. at 214E6; here 'assistance', or 'help' just reads more easily, without any change to the argument. Cf. 'beneficial' for the cognate adjective *ōphelimon* at 217B1 below.

'Just so.'

'But (*de ge*) a body is compelled (*anankazetai*) through sickness to embrace (*aspazesthai*) and love (*philein*) medical expertise.'

'It seems so to me.'

'The neither 217B5 bad nor good, in that case (*ara*), becomes friend of the good because of presence of bad.'

'It appears so.'

'But (*de ge*), clearly, before it, itself, becomes bad under the agency of the bad it has. For once it had become bad 217C1 it certainly wouldn't any longer, to any degree, desire³⁴ and be friend of the good; for we said it was impossible for bad to be friend to good.'

'Yes, impossible.'

'Consider, then, you two, what I'm saying. I'm saying that some things are themselves of such a sort as whatever it is that is present, while others are not. Just as, if 217C5 someone wanted to daub whatever it might be with a certain colour, the colour daubed on is I imagine (*pou*) present to the thing daubed.'

'Yes, absolutely.'

'Well then, is the thing daubed at that point of such a sort in colour as what is on it?'

217D1 'I don't understand,' he [Menexenus] said.

'It's like this,' I said: 'if someone daubed your hair, which is golden, with white lead, would it then be white, or appear white?'

'It would appear white,' he said.

'And at the same time whiteness would be *present* [emphasis justified by *kai mēn . . . ge*] to it.'

'Yes.'

'But all the same 217D5 at that point your hair wouldn't any more *be* white than it was before; whiteness may be present, but your hair isn't at all either white or indeed black.'

'True.'

'But, my friend, at the point when old age brings this very same colour to your hair, *then* it becomes of such a sort as what is present, white by presence 217E1 of white.'

'Obviously.'

'Well then, that's what I'm asking just now: whether whatever a thing is present to, i.e. what has that thing present to it, will be of such a sort as what is present? Or will it be so if it's present in a certain way, and not if not?'

'More the latter,' he said.

³⁴ Reading *tou agathou epithumoi*; the *hou* (neuter general of the relative) that the older manuscripts have between *tou agathou* and *epithumoi* seems to destroy the sense ('For once it had become bad it wouldn't actually [?] *kai* any longer be friend at all of the good it desired'). Or is Socrates saying ' . . . it wouldn't any longer desire the thing it is *supposed* to be desiring? The difficulty of defending the *hou* makes it reasonable to treat it as a copyist's duplication of the last two letters of the preceding word (*agathou*).

‘The neither bad nor good, then (*ara*), too, is sometimes, 217E5 with bad present, not yet bad, while there are times when already it has become such a thing’.³⁵

‘Yes, absolutely.’

‘So then, when it isn’t yet bad, but bad is present, *this* sort of presence makes it desire (*epithumein*) the good;³⁶ but the presence that makes a thing bad deprives it at one and the same time both of its desire (*epithumia*) and of its friendship for³⁷ the good.³⁸ For it isn’t any longer 218A1 neither bad nor good, but bad, and we agreed that bad wasn’t friend to good.’

‘No indeed.’

‘It’s just (*dē*) for these reasons that we’d say that those who are already wise (*sophoi*), too, no longer love wisdom (*philosophein*), whether these are gods or human beings; nor, again, would we say that those people love wisdom who have 218A5 ignorance (*agnōia*)³⁹ in such a way as to *be* bad, for (we’d say) no person who is bad and⁴⁰ ignorant (*amatheīs*) loves wisdom. There remain, then, those who have this bad thing, ignorance, but are not yet lacking in sense (*agnōmōn*) through its agency, nor 218B1 ignorant (*amatheīs*), but still think themselves not to know what they don’t know. Which gives us, then (*dio dē*), that those who do love wisdom are those who are as yet neither good nor bad, while as many as are bad don’t love wisdom, and neither do the good; for it became clear to us in what we said before that neither is the opposite friend of its 218B5 opposite nor the like of its like. Or don’t the two of you recall?’

‘Yes, absolutely,’ they both said.

‘Now, in that case,’ I said, ‘Lysis and Menexenus,⁴¹ we’ve absolutely and completely (*pantos mallon*) found out what the friend is and isn’t.⁴² For what we assert

³⁵ Sc. as the bad.

³⁶ Sc. given that *philia* occurs because of the bad (i.e. because the neither-good-nor-bad wants to avoid the bad), that being the proposal Socrates is trying to clarify.

³⁷ I.e. its *philia* of; here *philia* and *epithumia* are quite explicitly put together, as if they were the same thing (see above, and n. 44 below).

³⁸ It will rob it of all desire (sc. for the good) *and* all friendship for/of the good just insofar as, for Socrates, evidently all ‘friendship’ is for the good, and ‘friendship’ and ‘desire’ are the same thing. (Notice again, in the next sentence, ‘*x* is *philos* to *y*’ as *x* loving *y* rather than the reverse: see n. 6 above.)

³⁹ Sc. who have the *bad thing* ignorance; see A6 ‘There remain, then, those who have this bad thing, ignorance . . .’

⁴⁰ There is a temptation to say that the ‘and’ (*kai*) here is explanatory (*epexegetic*) – so ‘bad by being, or in being ignorant’; but in the present context bad just *is* ignorant.

⁴¹ It is perhaps striking (cf. n. 27 above) that even though it seems to have been mainly Menexenus who’s been responding, Socrates says ‘Lysis and Menexenus’, not ‘Menexenus and Lysis’; so too at c7–8 below. Is he expecting more of Lysis than he does of Menexenus; or is he still implicitly embarked on that demonstration to Hippothales (206c ff.)?

⁴² David Sedley (in Sedley 1989) has proposed reading *bou* (relative) for *ou* (negative) in B8, in line with his rejection of the interpretation of the *Lysis* as a ‘dialogue of definition’: so, not ‘what the *philon* is and isn’t’, but ‘what the *philon* is and of what’ (the general conditions or specifications of *philia*). We ourselves are inclined to doubt the value of the category ‘dialogues of definition’. We find it hard to resist the view that in the context of the dialogue as a whole, the question ‘What is the *philon*? is hardly different from the question ‘How do *x* and *y* become friends?’ (Socrates’ question at 212A5–6). Cf also Chapter 1, n. 4 above. In any case we tend to think Sedley’s emendation should be rejected.

about it, both in respect of the soul and in respect of the 218C1 body, and everywhere else, is that the neither bad nor good is friend of the good because of presence of bad.'

They both said they were absolutely in agreement that it was like this.

(ii) Comment

'So, you boys, . . . is it . . . leading us in the right direction, what we're saying now [i.e. that 'friendship' is exclusively a matter of the neither good nor bad 'becoming friend to' (i.e. desiring) the good]?' Socrates tries the new formula for size on a particular example, or pair of examples, and – apart from the way love/friendship is evidently treated as interchangeable with desire⁴³ – it seems initially to fit well enough. It's not a healthy body, i.e. one that's in a good condition, that requires assistance in the form of the doctor's art, but rather the sick one, the one in a bad condition. In other words, the body, which will sometimes be in a good, sometimes in a bad condition, and so is neither good nor bad in itself, becomes friend, *philon*, of/to something good when, and because, it gets into a bad condition.

At first sight this last element, 'because of the bad', may seem to come out of the blue. Granted that the aim is to explain why a thing becomes/is *philon* to another, why should Socrates start with *this* sort of explanation? On closer analysis, however, he is here doing no more than picking up from the unnamed speaker in the previous position, while further correcting the speaker's position. No, 'friendship' is not caused by things' being opposites; but yes, the case of the sick patient's relationship to the expert medical doctor – introduced by the unnamed speaker at 215D6 – is a useful example for

Firstly, Socrates is about to state what, for the moment, he really thinks 'the friend', *to philon*, is, in a form of words that echoes the sentence that first introduced the basic proposal that started off the present phase of the discussion (216CI–3): 'let's go on and consider this possibility too, whether the friend isn't perhaps eluding us to a still greater extent, in truth being none of these things, but what is neither good nor bad simply, perhaps, becoming friend of the good'; here, as there (we propose), 'what the *philon* is' refers not just to the loving subject, but to the complex of subject and object, and the relation between subject and object, all together. Secondly, Socrates has just reminded us of two things that the *philon* isn't; so 'and not/and what it isn't' makes perfectly good sense. 'And of what' makes sense too, but has no special point just here; and in fact in one respect it would actually be unhelpful, since the chief point about 217A3–218C3 has been to introduce a different element in the proposed account, i.e. 'because of the presence of the bad', at the expense – as it turns out – of the 'of what' (the stress in 218C1–2, as our translation is meant to bring out, is on 'because of presence of bad', not on 'of the good'). See further below. (Additional note: *kai ou*, in the context of an indirect question, seems perfectly respectable Greek; as our translation indicates, it will be short for *kai ho ouk esti to philon*.)

⁴³ We add this to remind the reader how far we have come from a discussion just of interpersonal relations. We doubt, indeed, that what *Socrates* had in mind was ever restricted just to interpersonal relations. Consider only the desire or love for knowledge at 207D–210D, 213D2–5, and the love for horses, wine and our infant children at 212D–E.

showing what ‘friendship’⁴⁴ is, as, presumably, is the relationship between those needing and lacking any sort of expertise and those who have it⁴⁵ (215D4–7), since this is no more than an innocuous generalization from the patient–doctor case. However, they are only useful examples if understood properly. For Socrates these are not at all examples of ‘friendship’ between *opposites*. The sick person is not the *opposite* of the doctor, nor is the ignorant person the *opposite* of the knowledgeable one (nor, again, is the bad *opposite* to the good). The ‘subtle’ speaker of 215D suggested that the sick person is ‘compelled’ (*anankazesthai*) to be *philos* to the doctor, and the layman to the expert, for the sake of the aid or assistance (*epikouria*) to be got from them; yet on this speaker’s analysis (or at any rate as Socrates understands that analysis) the compulsion came somehow from the presence of *opposition* between subject and object. Socrates now echoes the speaker’s language, at 217B3–4, while introducing a variation, carefully prepared in the preceding lines: he says that a body ‘is compelled (*anankazetai*) through sickness to embrace and love medical expertise’. In other words, he is improving on the speaker’s account of what are, from Socrates’ point of view, his central cases. There is nothing adventitious, then, about the turn the argument takes in 217A.

So – to go back to the argument of 217A3–218C3 – the sick patient does appear to provide a genuine case of something neither good nor bad ‘becoming friend to’ something good. In itself, or rather – as Socrates himself puts it at 217B2, with a qualifying *pou*, ‘I imagine’, ‘I suppose’ – just insofar as it is a body, the patient’s body is neither good nor bad, but it is ‘compelled’, because of its sickness, to ‘embrace and love’ the doctor’s expertise. This gives us some crucial information about what Socrates intends by the expression ‘neither good nor bad’, which was after all originally introduced only on the basis of the elimination of the good and the bad themselves as candidates for *philos* in subject position. What is neither good nor bad, or so the present example suggests, is something that, other things being equal, will be/can be either good or bad, and is neither when taken just by itself. (There is nothing about just being *a body* that determines that it will

⁴⁴ I.e. the far from ordinary conception of friendship (of *x* with *y*) that we have been noticing: one that makes it identical, or virtually identical, with desire (see ‘Interim explanatory note’ above). The reason for the qualification ‘or *virtually* identical’ is that we are reluctant to commit Socrates to the view that there is no more to friendship – of, or including, the ordinary, interpersonal kind – than desire (or, since he implies a similar relationship between *philia* and *erōs*, that there is no more to *erōs*, sexual desire, than there is to *philia*). The most that he needs to be committed to is that all are forms of desire, experienced by the same sort of subject, i.e. one neither good nor bad, and directed towards the same object, the good.

⁴⁵ More literally, ‘every sort that does not know, and the one that does’ (*panta . . . ton mē eidota . . . ton eidota*).

be in good condition or in bad, in the way that sickness is – or is said⁴⁶ – simply to be something bad, the medical art something good.)

Thus what we now have is: the neither good nor bad⁴⁷ becomes *philon* of the good because of (the) presence of bad (217B4–6).⁴⁸ But there are two types of ‘presence’ (argued in B6–E6), which Socrates illustrates with the example of whiteness. Whiteness can be ‘present to’ Menexenus’ golden hair in two different ways: either because he’s had white lead applied to it, so that his hair only appears white, and isn’t, despite the presence of whiteness, any more *white* for that; or because he’s grown old, and white-haired with it. This gives us a way in which what is neither good nor bad can nevertheless be thought of as being ‘compelled’ by the bad to go for the good. It’s just because it now ‘has’ something bad, but not as its permanent condition. Socrates now brings in another, and central, case, in a passage which because of its importance we repeat here:

‘It’s just for these reasons [i.e. those encapsulated in the general rule enunciated in the formula as stated at 217B4–6, with the proviso about the kind of ‘presence’ involved] that we’d say that those who are already wise, too, no longer love wisdom (*philosophein*), whether these are gods or human beings; nor, again, would we say that those people love wisdom who have ignorance in such a way as to *be* bad, for (we’d say) no person who is bad and ignorant loves wisdom. There remain, then, those who have this bad thing, ignorance, but are not yet lacking in sense through its agency, nor ignorant, but still think themselves not to know what they don’t know. Which gives us, then, that those who do love wisdom are those who are as yet neither good nor bad, while as many as are bad don’t love wisdom, and neither do the good . . .’ (218A2–B3)

Just as the healthy person doesn’t ‘become friend to’ the doctor and his expertise,⁴⁹ so the already wise, ‘we would say’,⁵⁰ no longer love wisdom; it’s those who lack it that love it, just as it’s the unhealthy and sick who love

⁴⁶ Sickness is *agreed* to be bad (217B1–2, 218E5), and health good (218E5–219A1); but 219C1–3 (with its sequel) probably suggests that these agreements are dialectical in nature. Nothing of the sort is implied or said in relation to the claim that ignorance is bad (most explicit at 218A6: ‘this bad thing, ignorance’). Still, there will be a difference between sickness and *terminal* sickness – if only for the purposes of illuminating the difference, which Socrates will now insist upon, between the mere ‘presence’ of ignorance in people, and the ignorance that makes people bad (what we may call ‘terminal’ ignorance, killing off all desire: 217E8–9 and 218A4–6). See further n. 119 below.

⁴⁷ Here actually ‘the neither bad nor good’; it’s badness, after all, that provides the main theme in the context.

⁴⁸ There is probably no significance in the absence of the definite article in the Greek (Socrates says, not ‘because of the presence of bad’, but ‘because of presence of bad’); all that is meant is ‘because bad is present’ (cf. D5–6, ‘whiteness being present . . .’/‘whiteness may be present, but . . .’).

⁴⁹ It’s medical expertise (*iatrikē*) at A5, the doctor in the next line, but the science again at B1. We discuss this interchangeability immediately below.

⁵⁰ ‘We would say’: not people at large, just Socrates and the two boys, in the light of what they’ve said and agreed.

medical expertise, with the condition – again, as in the case of the sick – that they have not themselves become ‘of such a sort as whatever it is that is present’ (217C3–4), i.e. taken on the character of that bad (thing), that *kakon*, that is alleged to be making them love wisdom. If that did happen to them, they would actually have become ‘bad’, *kakoi*, themselves, while those who had achieved the good, *agathon*, i.e. wisdom, for their part, would have become good, *agathoi*.⁵¹ On the assumptions that Socrates and the two boys have been making, then, the account of ‘friendship’ is confirmed: in respect of the soul as well as the body (and, Socrates suggests, everywhere else too),⁵² it’s the neither good nor bad that is ‘friend’, *philon*, of the good, because of the presence of bad (218B6–C2).

But there is one interesting *disanalogy* between the two cases. The sick person is said to ‘become friends’ either with medical expertise or with its possessor, the doctor. The interchangeability of the doctor with medical expertise is venial here. Strictly, it is the doctor’s expertise which the person loves.⁵³ Just so, the ignorant but not yet ‘terminally’ ignorant person – the person [totally] ‘lacking in sense’ (*agnōmōn*), 218A7 – is said simply to love wisdom. Why not be as casual about interchangeability in *this* case? Why not also say that the ignorant love the wise and ‘become friends’ with them? The omission is all the more significant, perhaps, in that the unnamed speaker from whom the present discussion took its cue (see above) seemed to claim specifically that all types of ignorant, or non-expert, people were on a par with the sick in loving *the expert* (215D6–7).⁵⁴ Later on, Socrates will hint at one reason for the difference, namely that we are all, as human beings, ‘between the bad and the good’.⁵⁵ So there are no experts to go to. If there were, one might add, Socrates and the boys wouldn’t need to be having their conversation at all; if it’s motivated by love of wisdom, *philosophia* – and he has signalled as much, at least for himself and Lysis (213D) – why

⁵¹ This use of *agathos* and *kakos* as applied to persons, i.e. as indicating the presence or absence of knowledge, is markedly non-standard in terms of ordinary Greek. It has, of course, been carefully prepared for in the preceding lines, but – as we have seen – it has also been Socrates’ favoured way of talking, when using his own voice: 210D2–3 and 215C6 are probably the clearest examples, but cf. also 204C1 ‘I am *phaulos* and useless (*achrēstos*) in other respects, but I do know this one thing . . .’ (*phaulos* is often used interchangeably, in ordinary Greek, with *kakos*; and n.b. the pairing of ‘useful’, *chrēsimos*, and ‘good’, *agathos*, at 210D2).

⁵² A rather large claim, given that the account has only in fact been tested on two examples. But in any case it is about to be rejected.

⁵³ See n. 49 above.

⁵⁴ 215D7 – ‘that every person, in fact, who lacks knowledge must prize the one who possesses it, and love him’ – seems to have the effect of generalizing from the case of the sick person. Whether it does or not, the suggestion still is that any person lacking in knowledge simply makes for the person who has it.

⁵⁵ See 220D5–6, and further below.

wouldn't they just go off and consult those who already *are sophoi*, as the sick consult their doctor? But if there is no one who is wise, Socrates and Lysis, and Menexenus, and we, can at any rate aspire to wisdom, and indeed the *Lysis* itself provides a small example of how intellectual progress can be made (even about why we aspire to anything)⁵⁶ – just so long as we don't think we know what we don't in fact know (218B1).

This is another of those few cases where it becomes impossible, or at any rate unhelpful, to stick to our resolution not to refer, for the elucidation of the *Lysis* (at least in Part I), to what transpires in other Platonic works. Those reading the little passage we have been discussing (218A2–B6), and who have also read the *Apology*, can hardly fail to notice the connections. They will think, at once, of Socrates' final response, there, to the Delphic oracle's (and so Apollo's) declaration that no one was wiser than him: that if he was wiser than anyone else, it was only because he was aware of his ignorance. That, he says, is the kind of human wisdom to which he can properly lay claim (the central passage is *Apology* 20D–23B; cf. 29A–B). Here in the *Lysis* this or a similar set of ideas functions, at least on the surface, merely as a subsidiary part of the argument, passing by us in a flash. However the resonances with the *Apology*, and with Socrates' justification, or explanation, there, of his own life and work,⁵⁷ make it difficult for us not to be arrested by the passage. And in fact the remainder of his argument, here in the *Lysis*, shows that he must stay committed to what he says here in 218A–B about ignorance and the search for knowledge, or rather about the general point that it is designed to illustrate, namely that if bad is present, it must not be such as to make the subject bad.⁵⁸ Well, *obviously* so, because then the subject would no longer be neither-good-nor-bad, as Socrates reminds Lysis and Menexenus at 217E9–218A1 – and follows this up by insisting that, equally,

⁵⁶ What about Miccus, that 'fair professional when it comes to wisdom' (as we translated *sophistes* at 204A7), who is said to teach at the wrestling-school where the conversation is taking place? Since he calls him Socrates' 'friend . . . and admirer' (204A5), evidently Hippothales thinks he's in the same business as Socrates; Socrates surely doesn't agree (see Chapter 1, n. 2 above).

⁵⁷ Or, at any rate, the one Plato allows him to give.

One might object that in the *Apology* Socrates actually *distinguishes* himself from others – a whole range of *soi-disant* experts about the good – politicians, poets and artisans – on the basis that he recognizes his ignorance while they don't; won't that give us, according to his argument here in the *Lysis*, that those experts are in fact bad – that they are, as we have put it, 'terminally' ignorant, while Socrates is not? We think not. At any rate, it is arguable that their willingness to undergo questioning suggests they are *capable* of recognizing when they are ignorant. What of those people who *refuse under any circumstances* to engage in dialectic? We speak to this question in n. 61 below.

⁵⁸ Though on our reading of Socrates' position in the dialogue, the two things will actually coincide: the general point is actually identical with the one about ignorance and knowledge (the good *is* knowledge, and the neither good nor bad *are* the ignorant, as long as this is not 'terminal' ignorance). See §§C, D, and § (C + D) below.

the subject can't actually be good, either (218B3–4).⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the bad evidently continues to be a factor in *philia* – which is why Socrates and the boys need to get clear about it: after all, according to the argument the bad is still ‘present’ in the desiring subject⁶⁰ – so apparently making it (him) not good, without at the same time making it (him) bad.⁶¹ One last point about 218A2–B6. Socrates ends the constructive part of our passage with

‘Which gives us, then, that those who do love wisdom are those who are as yet neither good nor bad, while as many as are bad don’t love wisdom, and neither do the good; *for it became clear to us in what we said before that neither is the opposite friend of its opposite nor the like of its like*. Or don’t you recall?’ (218B1–5)

⁵⁹ On this surprising idea, see [following note](#).

⁶⁰ At least, that is, insofar as it/he is ignorant; whether sickness, or indeed anything other than lack of knowledge, is to count as a bad thing is quite another question. See n. [46](#) above.

⁶¹ If we human beings are indeed all neither good nor bad (see text above), it follows that, on the account of the good as wisdom that is sponsored, or suggested, by the Socrates of the *Lysis* (cf., immediately, n. 58 above), there can be no wise people. Once again (as claimed in the present paragraph in the main text), there seems a clear enough intention on Plato’s part that we think here of the *Apology*’s claim that while Socrates is the wisest person there is, he knows nothing. It will also be the case that there should be no bad people – here identified as people so far gone in ignorance that they do not love wisdom at all. These, presumably, would be people with – impossibly? – no desire at all to be corrected in any of their beliefs, however germane to their getting things they want. (In fact, in terms of the account of love/desire Socrates is proposing, they would have no desires at all – i.e., if love/desire is always a matter of the neither-good-nor-bad loving/desiring the good; the bad – as he claimed earlier – do not love the good, and nothing except the good is loved.) To the claim that there are no ‘bad’ people – ‘bad’ insofar as ignorant – it is no objection that most people do not do, or want to do, philosophy: even those who don’t do philosophy could still be claimed to be wisdom-lovers (*philo-sophoi*), if wisdom, or merely some correction to their present beliefs, is the key to the getting of what they want (‘love’).

This last point explains our response to the suggestion that there *are* after all people who are ‘terminally’ ignorant, namely those who stubbornly turn their backs on all discussion of the good. Surely this is the group of people who suppose they are better off without all this intellectual discussion which ‘doesn’t get you anywhere’ (cf. Callicles in the third act of the *Gorgias*)? But then isn’t it important to such people that the belief that ‘intellectual discussion doesn’t get you anywhere’ should not impact on beliefs that they are operating with which might in fact fail to get them what they want? So if a question could be raised about one of *those* beliefs, the falsity of which would make them less well off, would they really be indifferent to the raising of such questions? Just how stubborn are these people supposed to be? They don’t care whether or not things turn out well for them? But if they do, then they are always potentially enlistable in a dialectic. We think – and we think Socrates thought – that there isn’t anyone *that* stubborn.

It is in this way that we need to understand how Socrates is using the verb *philosophein* in the present context (‘we’d say that those who are already wise, too, no longer *philosophein*, love wisdom’, 218A2–3; well, of course not, if their beliefs are *already* correct); cf. 212D, where wisdom-lovers, *philosophoi*, were compared with horse-lovers, quail-lovers, and so on. (On the other hand, the model presented by the *Lysis* itself makes doing philosophy, *philosophein* of the other sort, the only way of getting wisdom – it can’t just be handed on, like ordinary kinds of expertise, from the experienced to the apprentice, or from father to son. And it’s extraordinarily hard work, as the conversation between ‘old man’ Socrates and the boys shows, with every inch of the ground having to be fought for: another reason why there are no experts.) Thus there are only people who are neither good nor bad: people who are neither totally wise nor so totally ignorant as not to desire any correction of any belief relating to their getting what they want (the good).

It is reasonable here to ask what the function of the last part ('for it became clear . . .', b3–5) is. What has just been stated in 212–3, after all, already follows from what has been said just before, as the 'Which gives us, then' (*dio dē*) clearly indicates. So we don't seem to need another argument for the same conclusion; and if b3–5 were meant to be such an argument it would be a desperately bad one, involving a mis-statement of 'what we said before'.⁶² The function of b3–5 is rather to remind us ('Or don't you recall?') of the overall result of 213E–216B, and so – that, at any rate, appears to be Socrates' intention – to prevent any riposte in terms of either of the two special theories discussed and rejected there: 'and we've ruled out the possibility that bad can be attracted to good just because they are opposites, or good to good just because they are like[s]'.⁶³

(We note here in passing that if Socrates seems to have been slightly cavalier – a charge we have met before – in his use of his supposedly exhaustive refutations of 'like loves like' and 'opposite loves opposite', nevertheless we should remember that once we have the neither good nor bad and the good as universal values of our *x* and *y*, it's clear that no room can be made for either of the two theses. But this is merely to repeat the point that Socrates not infrequently chooses to anticipate himself.)

This prepares the way for another premature announcement of the end of the search, at 218B6–C2 (the last such announcement was at 214D–E):

⁶² The theses rejected were that likeness, or being opposite, made for *philia*. In the case of like/like, admittedly, the conclusion was reached via the impossibility of anything like loving its like, but in the case of opposite/opposite we were simply asked to contemplate the impossible consequences of supposing that oppositionness *necessarily* generated *philia* – which by itself would still allow the theoretical possibility of an opposite's loving its opposite. This seems all the more important if, as we have argued (see on 216D5–217A2 above), the case of bad loving good isn't in fact properly ruled out until the present passage distinguishes different ways of being bad.

⁶³ This last appeal to the earlier arguments against the poets and cosmologists may still disturb. For it suggests that Socrates may have thought he had argued successfully earlier on against the poets; while we (Penner and Rowe) have taken the position that without the present argumentation, the earlier arguments against the poets and cosmologists are inconclusive. See Chapter 4, §4 above for the problem that Socrates provides no adequate argument for the self-sufficiency of good people. At the level of good – assuming that a person who suffers on the rack does not have the good, yet may be as good a person as you please – that argument was certainly inadequate, at any rate against opponents who grant only so much as is granted by poets and cosmologists. But at the level of wisdom, even poets and cosmologists could surely have been brought to grant that those who *have* wisdom already – could there be any such people – do not now desire wisdom, have no motive to desire wisdom. For being wise they have everything that wisdom can assure them of, namely, what we have called such good as is available to them, given the luck that they start with. (This in turn may suggest a way in which Socrates forgot himself in thinking he had argued successfully against the poets and cosmologists – by way of thinking, himself, that wisdom *is* the good, so that to be self-sufficient would be to be self-sufficient in wisdom.)

‘Now, in that case,’ I said, ‘Lysis and Menexenus, we’ve absolutely and completely (*pantos mallon*) found out what the friend is and isn’t.⁶⁴ For what we assert about it, both in respect of the soul and in respect of the body, and everywhere else, is that the neither bad nor good is friend of the good because of presence of bad.’

Premature, because Socrates almost immediately has his suspicions about it. But he claims to think, for a moment,⁶⁵ that he’s there: ‘friendship’ (*philia*) is always, everywhere, a matter of the neither good nor bad being friend (*philon*), because of the bad, of the good.

*b. 218C4–219B4: what is philon is philon for the sake of the philon
because of the echthron(?)*

Socrates continues at 218C4:

And what’s more I myself, too, was overjoyed, like a sort of hunter, 218C5 at having adequately enough in my grasp (*echōn agapētōs*)⁶⁶ what I was hunting for. And then, I don’t know where from, the oddest sort of suspicion came into my mind that what we’d agreed wasn’t true, and immediately feeling agitated, I said ‘Oh dear! Lysis and Menexenus, it looks as if our riches were only a dream.’

218D1 ‘Why exactly?’ said Menexenus.

⁶⁴ On the text here, see n. 42 above. Given the interpretation proposed above of b3–5, and the context ('the search has ended': time for a kind of summing up?), 'and isn't' seems even more likely to be what Plato intended.

⁶⁵ This is a striking turn: Socrates surely already *knows* that 'the neither bad nor good is friend of the good because of presence of bad' isn't what he's after? (Plato certainly does. And Socrates must too: see below, in this note.) Yet here he is telling us, or at any rate his imagined external audience, that he thought for a moment that the hunt was over. One can see why he needn't always be, and hasn't always been, quite straight with Lysis and Menexenus, i.e. in order to keep them with him, take them further on, and so on (so especially at the beginning); but why shouldn't he be straight with his audience? The answer, we propose, is that the formula he's given us in b8–c2 ('the neither bad nor good is friend of the good because of presence of bad') is in fact getting pretty close; it's just that it isn't quite there, isn't refined enough, isn't something he should, finally, be content with. As before, the mode of Socrates' argument is a matter of pure dialectic – though in this particular case it is a dialectic that proceeds by way of a general advance to a relatively complex position, of which absolutely key parts have been explored one by one in successive additions (and eventually subtractions); each addition and subtraction being justified by the inadequacy of what was *prima facie* intuitive, but which examination shows to be inadequate. While Socrates' *statement* of his position is perpetually developing – in a way that is at the same time dialectical and explanatory – the position *aimed at* does not change throughout the dialectic. (How would his argument evolve in the steady and consistent way it does, if he didn't have a clear idea of the direction he was headed in?) Cf. 218E2–3 'I believe I'll understand more myself what I'm saying' (sc. if I put it in another way, of another point to Menexenus). Exactly how to state a complex theory, as we (Penner and Rowe) know only too well from experience, is itself a complex matter.

⁶⁶ I.e. well enough for me to be content (*agapan*). On Socrates' understanding more, himself, of what he is saying, cf. Chapter 1, nn. 16, 26, Chapter 4, n. 28, and Chapter 10, §2 below.

'I fear,' I said, 'that it's as if we'd met some people who were impostors – that we've fallen in with a form of words about the friend that are something like that.'⁶⁷

218D5 'How's that?' (218C4–D5)

So why does Socrates suspect something to be wrong with 218CI–2? The obvious way of answering that question is by looking to see how the next formulation of the proposed account of 'the friend' differs from the last. What we will be offered next is '. . . the neither good nor bad, because of the bad and inimical [i.e. *echthron*, used before as the opposite of *philon*; "enemy" as opposed to "friend", as in 213A–C, etc.], is *philon* of the good for the sake of the good and friend', and (so) 'it's for the sake of the friend that the friend is friend, because of the inimical' (219A6–B2, B2–3); or, to put it more transparently, it's for the sake of what is a friend, *philon*, i.e. for the sake of something loved/desired, that what is loved/desired (i.e. the thing originally said to be loved, the doctor) is loved/desired, because of what is 'inimical'. The second sentence (219B2–3) is there to indicate the crucial difference from the formulation at 218CI–2: the addition of 'for the sake of the *philon*' (sc. and good, *agathon*). The other obvious difference, the shift from good/bad (as in 218CI–2) to *philon/echthron* (as in 219B2–3), will be in itself more strategic⁶⁸ than substantial, since by now it surely counts as established that the object of 'friendship' is always good and that the object of its opposite, i.e. *echthra* (the noun corresponding to the adjective *echthros*: 'hatred'), is always bad – so that the two pairs are inter-substitutable. This shift seems, in fact, to be of a piece with the first difference: if it's *philia* we're talking about, there must be something that the *philos* subject is *going for* (he wants something *out of* the *philon* object), and the *philon/echthron* pair helps to make this point.

Hence the way Socrates now, in 218D6, starts off again by going back to basics:

⁶⁷ It is not clear why the words themselves (the Greek has just *logoi*, where our translation has 'form of words') shouldn't themselves be described, metaphorically, as 'impostors' – as other *logoi* in fact are, at *Republic* VIII, 560C; we've just had another metaphor – actually a double one, involving 'hunting down' (*therueusthai*) riches like a wild animal (*thēr*), so why not a second/third? The effect in any case is to stress the point of the comparison: that we'll need to be as cautious of these *logoi* of ours as we would be of human impostors (after all, he himself only so far *suspects* that there's a problem – the 'I fear' here introduces a genuine *fear*, not an assertion); and telling the genuine article from impostors will in fact turn out to be the leading idea of the section of argument beginning at 219B5 (discussed in our §C, below), itself announced as an aid to prevent our being *deceived* (219B6). (We are more than happy to leave the *pseudeisin* of the manuscripts in b3 bracketed – as it is in Burnet's text – as a gloss; it isn't so much that the *logoi* in question may be '*false*', exactly, just that they may not be as complete and final as they claimed/seemed to be.)

⁶⁸ The substitution of *philon* for *agathon* here is what will allow the next phase of the argument to lead to the 'first friend'.

'Like this,' I said [Menexenus' question was 'How's that?']: 'the person who'll be friend: is he or is he not friend to something?'

'Necessarily,' he said. (218D6–7)

Which is followed by

'Will it be for the sake of (*heneka*) nothing, and because of (*dia*) nothing, or for the sake of something and because of something?'

'For the sake of something and because of something.' (218D7–9)

But now there is a move that we might not have expected; for Socrates seems to assume that that 'something for the sake of which' is *something else*, i.e. something other than, or beyond, the thing originally said to be *philon* (or *philos*):

'That thing – for the sake of which the friend is friend 218D10 to the friend – being friend, or neither friend nor enemy?'⁶⁹ (218D9–10)

And Socrates takes this position as standard. That is, he now treats all *philia* as involving three terms, not two. The immediate source of this model, or at any rate the one Socrates relies on to make his point, is the example of the patient and the doctor (not so clearly, or not at all, the other example, the ignorant lover of wisdom: see above). The patient, to the extent that he or she is a patient, of course doesn't love the doctor for himself, or herself, but for the sake of another thing (health); just so, Socrates proposes, for all cases of *philia* – there will always be a third term. (But how can that be? Won't that lead to a regress? This will be the point raised by 219B5 ff., i.e. the passage to be treated in our §C below.)

Menexenus' response to 218D9–10 is hardly surprising:

218E1 'I don't understand at all,' he said.

Socrates, equally unsurprisingly, is sympathetic (it wasn't exactly transparent, even if it wasn't *that* difficult), and proceeds to spell things out:

'That's reasonable enough (*eikotōs ge*),' I said; 'but if I put it another way, perhaps you'll follow, and I believe I'll understand more myself what I'm saying: the sick person, we were saying just now, is friend of the doctor; isn't that so?'

'Yes.'

'Is it then because of sickness, for the sake of health, that he's friend of the 218E5 doctor?'

'Yes.'

⁶⁹ If 'enemy' makes it look as if the object here is personal, that is not intended; the Greek, here once again, fails to distinguish between personal and impersonal.

‘But sickness is a bad thing?’

‘Of course.’

‘What about health?’ I said; ‘is it a good thing, or a bad thing, or neither of the two?’

‘A good thing,’ 219A1 he said.

‘So then (*ara*) what we were saying, it seems, was that the body, which is neither good nor bad,⁷⁰ because of the sickness [sc. present to it], that is, because of the bad, is friend (*philon*) of medical expertise, and medical expertise is a good thing; but that it’s for the sake of health that the medical expertise has become the object of the friendship, and health is a good thing. 219A5 Is that right?’

‘Yes.’

‘And is the health something that’s a friend or something that’s not a friend?’

‘A friend.’

‘And the sickness is something that’s inimical (*echthron*).’⁷¹

‘Yes, absolutely.’

‘So then (*ara*) the neither 219B1 bad nor good, because of the bad and inimical, is friend of the good for the sake of the good and friend.’⁷²

‘It appears so.’

‘So then it’s for the sake of the friend that the friend⁷³ is friend, because of the inimical.’

‘It seems so.’⁷⁴ (218E1–219B4)

So: what loves, loves what it loves not just *because of* something, but *for the sake of* something. This ‘for the sake of something’ was an element that was missed out in 218C1–2, and the omission was part of what lay behind Socrates ‘oddest of suspicions’, at 218C6, that he and his interlocutors had agreed to something that wasn’t true. But it will turn out that it was not the whole problem: see 220B6 ff., and D below.

⁷⁰ The participle *on*, supplied by Heindorf after *kakon* in 219A2, is probably needed, though the sense (and emphasis) of the sentence is clear enough in any case.

⁷¹ With ‘friend’, or ‘a friend’, for *philon*, it might be preferable to translate *echthron* here as ‘enemy’, as we have sometimes done before; but it will be impossible to sustain this in B1, and we are in fact dealing with adjectives throughout (‘friend’ merely substituting for the impossible ‘friendly’: cf. n. 13 to Chapter 3 above).

⁷² See preceding note (‘the friendly’ would be closer to the Greek, if only ‘friendly’ stood for the right thing).

⁷³ We reject the second *tou philou* added in B3 by Madvig (as reported by Burnet) after *to philon*, and subsequently by Burnet after the first *tou philou*. Madvig’s/Burnet’s text would apparently give us that the *philon* (object) will be *philon* of the *philon* (subject) for the sake of the *philon*. While the addition (perhaps suggested by B6–7) is innocuous, since what is added only spells out what is anyway implied, it seems pointless for the same reason.

⁷⁴ Menexenus’ last two, more qualified, replies may not be because he is resisting the conclusions but just because of their complex form. In themselves, Socrates’ formulae may look confusing and paradoxical, but are actually perfectly intelligible; and he will make constructive use of them rather than using them to produce contradictions (so distinguishing himself from a mere expert in ‘eristics’: see e.g. Chapter 2, text to nn. 5, 6).

C. 219B5–220B5: *the first, and true, thing that is friend* (*philon*), contrasted with so-called ‘friends’, which are for the sake of this first friend

However in the meantime there is something more immediate that needs to be cleared up: Socrates and the boys need to ‘pay attention to avoid our being deceived (*exapatasthai*)’ (219B6). The same verb, *exapatan*, will crop up twice more: in B9, which repeats the same point as in B6, and in 219D4, where Socrates tells us more precisely *what* is in danger of deceiving them. The outcome of 219B5–220B5 is a clarification that enables us to avoid falling into the trap in question, the nature of which is plainly signalled by 220B6–7: ‘This, then, we’re rid of, that the friend is friend for the sake of some friend.’⁷⁵ That is what was actually proposed by 219B2–3: ‘So then it’s for the sake of the friend that the friend is friend,’ on the back of the example of the sick person (*philos* of the doctor and his expertise, so they said, for the sake of that further *philon* which is health).⁷⁶ If that were always the case (and once again, it’s a general account of *philia* that Socrates is permanently after), then of course that other *philon* too would have to be *philon* for the sake of some other *philon*, and since we’ll get ‘worn out’⁷⁷ going on that way, we’ll have to stop somewhere, with a *philon* that *isn’t* *philon* for the sake of another one. So the formula at 219B2–3 (‘it’s for the sake of the friend that the friend is friend’) can’t be right. Some *phila*, evidently, will be *phila* for sake of some other *philon*, while at least one will not. Or at any rate that’s what we might expect Socrates to say.

But this is to anticipate; we need first to look in detail at the earlier parts of the argument of 219B5–220B5. This passage, because it introduces us to the notorious, and/or mysterious, ‘first friend’ (*philon*), is one of the most celebrated in the *Lysis*. After all, for those to whom the rest of the dialogue appears a rather featureless and infertile terrain, the arrival on the scene of what looks like – or *can* look like, under some lights, from some perspectives – a recognizable landmark (the truly loveable, the truly good; the ‘Form of the Good?’⁷⁸) was always liable to seem especially diverting.

⁷⁵ Not ‘some other friend’, because – as we shall see – Socrates thinks there is only one (true) ‘friend’, i.e. the first. (And he doesn’t say ‘some other’, except when referring to what we mistakenly say: 219A7–B1.)

⁷⁶ That other element in the formula at B2–3, ‘because of the inimical/bad’, is for the moment being left aside, as if it were unproblematical; it will come up for reconsideration, and ultimate rejection, in 220B6 ff.

⁷⁷ 219C5 *apeipein*. For this use of the verb the closest parallel is perhaps at *Phaedo* 85C, where it seems to have the sense ‘until one becomes exhausted by examining [sc. what’s said] in every way’.

⁷⁸ ‘The greatest object for study (*mathēma*), according to the Socrates of Book vi of the *Republic* (504D): the cornerstone of Platonic metaphysics, but as under-described there, one might have thought, as

The fact that there is no noticeable change of tempo in this section, just a further step in the argument and with more to follow, is of course neither here nor there; why should central ideas not be introduced without fanfare, almost nonchalantly, as part of the ordinary business of argument? If they are in fact philosophically justifiable, or justified, isn't that exactly how they ought to come in? Nevertheless, it will be as well for any interpreter to check to see just what *is* introduced here, and not to assume in advance that we know what it is.

Socrates begins by dismissing, or proposing to pass over, a difficulty that might be raised about 219B2–3:

219B5 ‘Well then,’ I said: ‘now that we’ve got here, boys, let’s pay attention to avoid our being deceived. I let pass⁷⁹ that the friend has turned out to be friend of the friend, and that like turns out to be friend of *like*,⁸⁰ which we say is impossible; . . .’ (219B5–8)

In one way, it is the most superficial of difficulties: a friend (subject) must always be a friend of a friend (object), so both will be friends, and therefore, to that extent, alike. So unless there is no such thing as loving, and being a friend, the earlier conclusion that likes can’t be friend to likes (214E–215A) cannot be taken to rule *that* out. (Perhaps there is just no single attribute here?) But from a different point of view, i.e. from Socrates’ own, it will actually turn out that, in genuine cases of love, lover and beloved will be alike: see Chapter 6 – and Chapter 7, on 222B3–C2, which seems to represent Socrates’ way of finessing the point. (‘Letting pass’, then, would be *both* ‘dismissing’ and ‘passing over’, i.e. for now.)⁸¹

In any case, we have not yet got to that point. Socrates continues:

‘. . . but for all that, let’s consider the following, to prevent what we are saying now (*to legomenon*) from deceiving **219CI** us. Medical expertise, we say, is a friend (*philon*) for the sake of health.’

‘Yes.’

it is (apparently) important – under-described, that is, at any rate if one takes Books v–vii on their own, as interpreters frequently take them, without reference to Book x (esp. 596a–598c, 601c–602b, where the Form of the Good is placed in the context of a *functional* theory of the good).

⁷⁹ ‘I let the following [men, b6: i.e. ‘on the one hand’] pass . . .; but what I can’t let pass [*all’ homos* . . ., b8–9] is (what I think is in danger of deceiving us about our formulation].’ See below on what kind of ‘letting pass’ this is.

⁸⁰ The italics are justified by the emphatic *ge* in the Greek.

⁸¹ We ourselves pass over the problems with that earlier argument for the (alleged) impossibility of like’s loving like: see Chapter 4, §§1, 4. Once again, it is at any rate not *likeness itself* that causes friendship.

‘Is health too, then, a friend?’

‘Yes, absolutely.’

‘So then, if it’s a friend, it’s [sc. a friend] for the sake of something.’

‘Yes.’

‘For the sake of some *friend*,⁸² then (*dē*), if it’s going to conform to our previous agreement.’

‘Yes, absolutely.’

‘And then again, that too, in its turn, will be 219C5 friend for the sake of a friend?’

‘Yes.’

‘Won’t we then (*ou*n) necessarily wear ourselves out⁸³ if we go on like this, and won’t we have to arrive at some beginning, which will no longer refer to another friend, but will have come to that thing which is 219D1 a friend [*philon*, adjective] first,⁸⁴ for the sake of which we say that the other things too, all of them, are friends (*phila*)?’

‘Agreed: necessarily.’

‘This, then (*dē*) is what I’m saying, that we must beware of all those other things that we said were friends for the sake of *that one*,⁸⁵ that like some sort of images (*eidōla*) of it they don’t deceive us, when that first one is what is 219D5 truly friend.’ (219B8–D5)

The central issues here are probably two. First, what does Socrates have in mind when he describes ‘those other things that we said were friends for the sake of *that one*’ as ‘some sort of images’, *eidōla atta*, of the first (thing that’s a) friend, *philon*? Second, and in some ways most crucially for the overall interpretation of the *Lysis*, what is this ‘first friend’ (as we may call it, so long as we don’t suppose that this accurately translates the Greek: see the end of the last sentence)? A fairly clear answer may be offered to the

⁸² Emphatic *ge* again. ⁸³ See n. 77 above.

⁸⁴ The text here in c5–D1 is in some doubt, though the general sense seems not to be; we follow the text as printed by Burnet, except that we prefer the MSS’ *kai* to Schanz’s *ē* in c6 (so *kai aphikesthai*, rather than *ē aphikesthai*). The chief problem is perhaps with *all’ hēxei ep’ ekeino . . .*: the subject is still apparently *tis archē*, ‘some beginning’, but if the *archē* will no longer refer to another *philon*, how can it have ‘come to that which is first *philon*’? Shouldn’t it be that first *philon* itself? This problem will need to be left hanging, since we see no clear solution to it; later developments in the dialogue may or may not throw further light on it (though so far we have not seen that they do).

⁸⁵ Since they’ve only just said that ‘all those other *phila*’ are ones ‘we say’ are *phila* for the sake of the ‘first *philon*’ (i.e. in D1–2), the aorist (*eipomen*, ‘we said’) here in D3 must presumably be referring to something further back: to 219B2–3 (‘it’s for the sake of the friend that the friend is friend, because of the inimical’), which after all was supposed to be an entirely general statement. The difference is that ‘the friend for the sake of which’ the friend was (said to be) friend has now been identified; so that now Socrates can reasonably talk about ‘those . . . things we said were friends for the sake of that’, i.e. the thing that is ‘friend first’: that was what we were saying, even if we didn’t know it at the time, since otherwise, as 219B5–D2 allegedly shows, we would have been saying nothing.

first question. What is said about ‘those other things’ is that while we call them *phila* of a sort (cf. 219C7, 220D8–E1), i.e. *heneka heterou philou phila*, ‘friends for the sake of a different friend’ (220A7–B1, E2), and of course⁸⁶ *philou heneka phila*, ‘friends for the sake of a friend’ (220E2; but already implied at 219B2–3; then at D3, 220B4–5), they are not ‘truly’, or ‘really’, ‘friends’, *phila* (219D3–5, 220A7–B3, E2); that calling them ‘friends’ at all is no more than a manner of speaking (220A1–B3); that we are in danger of being ‘deceived’ by them, in that we may mistake them for a true *philon* (219D2–5, B1–2, B9–C1); and that they are only, as it were, made into – what we call – a kind of ‘friends’, i.e. ‘friends’ for the sake of something else, by what they are for the sake of. (Insofar as it is right to call them ‘friends’ at all, which by Socrates’ lights it is not, then it is purely and simply by virtue of their relationship to something else that they are such. In being friends only for the sake of further friends, they are not friends *tout court*; they are not, so to speak, ‘categorical’ friends, but only ‘hypothetical’ friends.) All of this seems to give a reasonably clear sense to the proposal that they are ‘images’ of a sort: they are like reflections, or shadows (*eidola*), cast by the real thing.

So now we can say at least something about the ‘first friend’; that is, about the way in which it is ‘first’. It is ‘*first philon*’ in the precise sense that it’s the first thing we come to, as we track forward through the things we say are *phila*, that is truly *philon*. Not ‘*first philon*’, then, as ‘first’ (somehow) out of many; rather first (and only). This must be so, because whatever it is that is *philon* ‘first’ is so described, i.e. at 219D1 and 4, only in relation to a presumed chain of *phila* of which the other links are in process of being denied the status of (true) *phila*. And in the example that will follow, although the father ‘makes much of’ the things that will contribute to saving his son’s life, ‘all the concern in such cases is expended, not on the things that are procured for the sake of something, but on the thing for the sake of which all such things are procured’ (219E7–220A1).

But let us pick up Socrates’ actual argument where we left it. Those putative ‘friends’ (*phila*), he suggested, were like *eidola*, ‘images’, as it were reflections or shadows, of the real thing. In one way, surely, they appear to be rather *unlike* reflections or shadows: shadows or reflections are not means to what they are shadows or reflections of, whereas the things in question here – the things we call ‘friends’, when they’re not (i.e. not ‘true’ ones) – are evidently viewed, even by Socrates, as means, ways of advancing,

⁸⁶ ‘Of course’, because this is precisely what the true ‘friend’ is being said not to be, by being contrasted with these other things.

to the ‘first friend’. That, at any rate, is what is suggested by the immediate sequel:

‘Let’s look at it like this. Whenever anyone makes much of (*peri pollou poieitai*) anything, as for example sometimes a father prefers (*protimai*) a son to all his other things (*chrēmata*): that sort of person, for the sake of thinking 219E1 everything (*heneka tou . . . peri pantos hēgeisthai*)⁸⁷ of the son – would he also make much of some other thing too? As for example if he noticed that he’d drunk hemlock, would he make much of wine, if he really thought this would save the son?’

‘Of course,’ [Menexenus] said.

‘So (*oukoun*) of any vessel the 219E5 wine was in, too?’

‘Yes, absolutely.’

‘Then (*oun*) does he under these circumstances (*tote*) make no more of anything, a ceramic cup or his own son, or again three measures⁸⁸ of wine or the son? Or is it something like this: all the concern in such cases isn’t expended on the things that are procured (*ta paraskeuazomena*) for the sake of something, but on the thing for the sake of which all 220A1 such things are procured?’ (219D5–220A1)

Provided that this is a case of *philia* as well as of ‘making much of’ things,⁸⁹ it might look reasonable to object that the example actually works against Socrates: aren’t the cup and the wine the *means* to the son’s health, and so desirable (‘loveable’, *phila*), along with that (i.e. as means to it), even if they will only be desirable because of it? Similarly with the second case that we’re about to be offered, in 220A2: aren’t gold and silver desirable as a *means* to what we can get with them? But Socrates doesn’t say that:

‘This isn’t to deny that we often say we make much of (*peri pollou poieisthai*) gold and silver, but I venture that that doesn’t make it any *truer*; that other thing is what we make everything of (*peri pantos poieisthai*), whatever it comes to light as being,⁹⁰ for the sake of which both 220A5 gold and all the other things that are procured are procured. Shall we assert it to be like this?’

⁸⁷ It is hard to see any difference in this context between *hēgeisthai*, ‘think’, here, and the *poieisthai*, ‘make’, that precedes and follows it (D6, E2); that is, to ‘make much’ of something would be the same as ‘thinking much’ of it, and ‘thinking everything’ of it would be the same as ‘making everything’ of it (and in fact *peri pantos poieisthai* in 220A4 clearly corresponds to *peri pantos hēgeisthai* here in 219E1).

⁸⁸ That is, three *kotulai*: say, roughly, 700 ml. Given that wine would normally be mixed with water, perhaps even to a ratio of five parts of water to two of wine (see e.g. Davidson 1997: 46, though he is drawing on the evidence of comedy), a lot under normal circumstances even for an adult.

⁸⁹ More exactly, it is a *prima facie* case of something ‘loved for its own sake’, by contrast with things loved for the sake of *it* – things loved *tout court*, loved ‘categorically’, as we put it earlier (text after n. 86), rather than ‘hypothetically’. But this does not stop our calling into question whether the person *can* be loved for his or her own sake – in entire independence from all questions of happiness.

⁹⁰ Compare Lombardo’s ‘whatever it turns out to be’, in the Hackett translation; certainly more idiomatic English than our ‘whatever it comes to light as being’. One of the purposes of our rendering is to mark the presence in 220A4 of the verb *phainesthai* with participle (*bo an phanēi on*), which usually indicates something that is plainly the case (as in B1 below, though it doesn’t quite fit here), rarely if at all what merely *appears* to be the case.

‘Yes, absolutely.’

‘Then does the same account (*logos*) apply to the friend (*to philon*), too? For as often as we say things are friends (*phila*) to us for the sake of some other 220B1 friend (*philon*), it’s plainly just a word we’re using when we say it;⁹¹ and what is really a friend (*philon*) seems likely (*kinduneuei*) to be that very thing to which these so-called “friendships” finally lead (*eis ho . . . teleutōsin*).’

‘It does seem likely to be like this,’ he said.

‘So (*oukoun*) what is *really philon* (*to ge tōi ontī philon*) is not a friend (*philon*) for the sake of some 220B5 friend (*philon ti*)?’

‘True.’ (220AI–B5)

Just as a shadow or a reflection of a person isn’t that person, so these other so-called ‘friends’, *phila*, aren’t *phila*. We say that they are so for the sake of some other ‘friend’, but actually what we love is not them but whatever it is we love them *for*.

Why should Plato have Socrates go this way? Why should he not allow that ‘so-called’ ‘friends for the sake of some other friend’ really are ‘friends’, if only of a qualified, derivative sort? That he is not doing so is finally put beyond any reasonable doubt by the fact that such ‘friends’ are to be specifically excluded from the account of *to philon*, ‘the friend’ (i.e. of what that complex relationship called ‘friendship’ actually is, or involves). For Socrates will now move from “So what is *really philon* is not *philon* for the sake of some *philon*?” (“True”) in 220B4–5 to ‘This, then, we’re rid of, that the *philon* is *philon* for the sake of some *philon*’ in 220B6–7. The dropping of the ‘really’ (*tōi ontī*) is critical: if it had been retained, then clearly the image-like ‘friends’ (*phila*) could be expected to be included in some more relaxed account of ‘friendship’; but as it is, that these ‘friends’ are not true friends is clearly treated as a reason for not counting them as friends at all.⁹² Why? Perhaps because the ‘so-called friends’ matter to us only in case they give us what we ‘procure’ them for. Of course, equally, without these things we won’t have whatever it is for which we procure them (so, surely, they *are* ‘friends’). But Socrates would be unimpressed. ‘For as often as we say things are friends to us for the sake of some other friend, *it’s plainly just a word we’re using when we say it*; and what is really a friend seems likely

⁹¹ More literally ‘it’s with a word that we’re plainly saying it’ (*rhēmati phainometha legontes auto*). (Lombardo has ‘it is clear that we are merely using the word “friend”’; Bordt ‘nennen wir offenbar bloss mit einem uneigentlichen Ausdruck so’: ‘we’re plainly using an inappropriate expression to name it thus’.)

⁹² We might try taking B6–7 to say ‘(so not *all phila* are *phila heneka tinos*; so) the *philon* can’t be identified exclusively with the *philon heneka tinos*’. But this won’t work, because in the next section Socrates will treat the *philon* (in object position) as the good without qualification, i.e. the ‘really’ good, where this continues to be contrasted with the ‘so-called’ friends/goods. See below.

to be that very thing to which these so-called “friendships” finally lead’ (220A7–B3).

There are several possible reactions to this: first, to say that Socrates is just making a mistake, unconnected with anything else (carried away, perhaps, by his own rhetoric?); second, perhaps, to say that he is really only concerned with identifying ends, and not making a full classification of *phila*, i.e. of goods;⁹³ or, third, just to go with Socrates, and see what the consequences for his position will be if we take what he says at face value (so that a mistake might still be involved, but it would implicate a whole *nexus* of ideas rather than being a mere isolated slip). The third is our preferred option – in part, of course, because we think we can find something by moving in this direction that will answer our questions more satisfactorily than either of the other two options. As usual, we take the first option to be no more than a last resort, and the second carries little conviction in light of the emphasis we see Socrates putting on his conclusion: the ‘so-called friendships’ *just aren’t friendships*. How to make sense of this? It might make sense, of course, as applied to friends as ordinarily understood: if we court someone because of what we want out of them, then we shall reasonably be said to love, not that person, but what we want from them (no real friendship, then, here).⁹⁴ But Socrates has bigger things in mind than this: nothing short of a general account of what ‘friendship’, *to philon*, is, *everywhere*. And with that general account in mind, he rules out things like gold and silver (220A2) that are ‘procured’ for the sake of something else as ‘friends’ (and goods). To understand why he does this, we need to ask what, if these ‘so-called friends’ (goods) are not in fact friends, he will consent to say about them. The answer seems to be that they belong to the category of things that Socrates describes in 220C4–5 – picking up on what he said about the body, ‘just insofar as it is a body’, at 217B2–3⁹⁵ – as things that ‘we say, *themselves in themselves*, are neither bad nor good’. Or,

⁹³ This move, of suggesting that Socrates is concerned with a special sense of ‘desire’ or ‘love’, in which one desires ends only, and not with desiring or loving means, has been tried as an account of *Gorgias* 466A–468E. For the reason why this is a failed strategy, see Penner 1991. That the good, and only the good, is *philon* counts as established, as the shift from good/bad to *philon/echthon* in 218D–219B showed; it will be reasserted explicitly in 220B7–8.

⁹⁴ This needs to be distinguished from Socrates’ position here in the *Lysis*: while he holds that in any relationship of *philia* there must be something in it for the one loving (so esp. at 214E–215C), we already have evidence enough that he holds loving people to involve wanting *them* to be happy. On how and why his position is to be distinguished from selfishness, see e.g., and esp. (thus far), Chapter 2, n. 59 above.

⁹⁵ What was said about the body in 217B was in fact then implicitly extended to the soul, i.e. in the course of the ensuing discussion of ‘presence’; hence . . . ‘whether body, or soul, or any of the other things that we say, themselves in themselves, are neither bad nor good’ in 220C3–5.

to use a different form of words, they are *merely hypothetical friends/goods*.⁹⁶ That is: we cannot say they are friends, or good, *sans phrase*, because they are only such if they do in fact lead to the friend and good that they are ultimately for the sake of.⁹⁷ The exact interpretation of ‘in themselves’ is likely to become controversial. For the moment, we alert the reader that we (Penner and Rowe) intend to construe ‘in itself’ simply as ‘everywhere’ or ‘always’ – removing anything *modal* from the understanding of ‘not for the sake of something further’. For argument on this, see Chapter 11, §8 below.

None of this is spelled out here in 219–20 or indeed anywhere in the *Lysis*; we shall be revisiting the issues later (see Section (C + D) – and then Chapter 11 – below). For the moment what matters is that if we take Socrates at his word when he denies that the things in question are true ‘friends’/goods, he has an alternative account to give of them, which is moreover of a piece with the claim that only the ‘first friend’ is truly a ‘friend’/good: that calling things (allegedly) loved for the sake of something else ‘friends’ ('loved') is misleading, or ‘deceiving’,⁹⁸ because they are only *sometimes* (i.e. and not always, everywhere) good. They do not by themselves – ‘themselves in themselves’: see above – guarantee a particular outcome, matching our desires. (It is in this way, perhaps, that they ‘deceive’ us.) So they cannot be ‘friends’ in themselves – only, perhaps, when they actually do turn out to achieve the right outcome. At any rate, this is what we think Socrates has in mind to say about why what he treats as ‘so-called friends’ – the things ‘for the sake of’ the ‘first friend’ – are not real friends. We do not deny, however, that this still leaves a troubling question: why, if it is true that none of cups, wine or health is *always* a means to the good – and so in that way not *good in themselves* – are they not nevertheless *good, and so friends, on those occasions where they do lead to the good?* More on this point below.

In the present context (219–20), however, Socrates’ eye is not on this, but on setting up the ‘first friend’, the ‘first (thing that is) *philon*’ – further discussion of which we now propose to postpone until we have looked at the next stretch of the argument, in which the ‘first friend’ will play a part. But discussion of that subject will at the same time throw further light on the ‘so-called friends’.

⁹⁶ If, by contrast with these ‘hypothetical’ goods, we treat the ‘first friend’ as a ‘categorical’ good, it is of course important that this has nothing to do with any *moral* good, as it certainly would in Kant.

⁹⁷ See 220B1–3 (‘what is really a friend seems likely to be that very thing to which what we call “friendships” finally lead’).

⁹⁸ 219D2–4.

One more point to notice, before we leave 219B5–220B5: that Socrates has in the course of the passage implicitly demoted medicine and its possessor, the doctor, to this status of ‘so-called friends’. This is in 219C1–5 – unless, of course, health itself should turn out to be a ‘first friend’. But that, we suggest, it will not.⁹⁹ Here – not for the first or the last time – we move beyond ordinary assumptions: ‘What? Medicine isn’t a good thing?’ But then Socrates has shown precious little interest so far in encouraging us to maintain those ordinary assumptions.

D. 220B6–221C5: presence of bad is not the cause of ‘friendship’

Socrates now changes the terms of the discussion back from *philon/echthron* to good/bad, and returns to the previous proposal that the good is *philon* (‘is loved’, *phileitai*) ‘because of the bad’:

‘This, then, we’re rid of, that the friend is friend for the sake of some friend; but is the good a friend?’¹⁰⁰

‘It seems so to me.’

‘Is it then because of the bad that the good is loved . . .’ (220B6–8)

– and then comes a question that perhaps ought to show immediately that this is actually impossible:

220C1 ‘. . . and is it like this: if of the three things we were talking about just now, good, bad, and neither good nor bad, two were still left, but the third, the bad, were to take itself off out of the way and affected nothing, whether body, or soul, or the other things, the ones we say, themselves **220C5** in themselves, are neither bad nor good,¹⁰¹ is it the case that then¹⁰² the good would not be useful (*chrēsimon*) to us at all, but would have become useless (*achrēston*)? For if nothing any longer harmed us, we wouldn’t need **220D1** any help (*ōphelia*) at all, and in this way, given those circumstances (*tote*), it would become manifest that it was because of the bad that we were attracted by (*ēgapōmen*) and loved (*ephiloumen*) the good, on the basis that the good was a cure (*pharmakon*) for the bad, and the bad a sickness; and if there’s no sickness there’s no need for a cure. Is the nature **220D5** of the good like this, and is it loved like this, because of the bad, by us who are between the bad and the good, and does it have no use, itself for the sake of itself?’

‘It seems,’ [Menexenus] said, ‘to be like that.’

⁹⁹ See §(c + d) below.

¹⁰⁰ I.e., now, presumably, ‘is the good a *true* friend?’ (The Greek, it should be remembered, has no indefinite article; the ‘a’ is supplied, and may be misleading. See below.)

¹⁰¹ The most important reference here is to 217B2–3 (see §c above).

¹⁰² I.e. under those circumstances: *tote*. Similarly in d1 (‘given those circumstances’).

'In that case (*ara*) we find that that friend of ours, the one to which we said¹⁰³ all the rest finally led 220EI – "friends' for the sake of another friend" was what we said they were – doesn't resemble them at all.¹⁰⁴ For these have the name "friends for the sake of a friend", whereas the true friend ['the truly *philon*'] plainly has a nature that's wholly the opposite of this; for it showed up as plainly being a friend (*philon*) to us for the sake of something inimical (*echthrou beneka*), and if the inimical 220E5 took itself off it's no longer, it seems, a friend to us.'

'It doesn't seem so to me,' he said, 'as least if it's put as it is now.' (220CI–E6)

If the good is 'a friend' because of the bad, then its being loved is entirely dependent on the existence of the bad that makes it (the good) loved, *philon*. We won't love it *for itself*, only 'for the sake of the bad': i.e. for the sake of 'curing' the 'sickness' which the bad represents (literally, in the case of the sick patient who needs the doctor). In speaking of the consequence that one would be loved only for the sake of the bad, Socrates is not, as some suppose,¹⁰⁵ ignoring his careful distinction between the because of (*dia*) what and that for the sake of (*heneka*) which, but rather making use of it. If it were true that the good would no longer be friend if the bad disappeared, then, if there is always a something for the sake of which in 'friendship', that something in this case must be (getting rid of) the bad – hence love *is*, on this view, for the sake of the bad.¹⁰⁶

Another way of looking at the present point about the effect of having the good be desired because of the bad is this: deprive the good of any content but the absence of bad, i.e. make good the privation of bad. On such a picture of the good, the bad (i.e. evil) is the only real thing here: where we speak of 'the good', we are just speaking of the absence of the bad.

¹⁰³ 'We said' is contained in the 'philosophical' imperfect *eteleuta*.

¹⁰⁴ 'All the rest', in D8, could mean 'all the other *phila*', but need not; and since Socrates appears to have taken the argument of the preceding section as showing that '*phila* for the sake of some other *philon*' are not true *phila*, there is reason to resist that translation. The parenthesis "*phila* for the sake of another *philon*" was what we said they were' (EI), together with the work to which these '*phila*' are now to be put, might then seem to point in the opposite direction – if it were not that this was said to be a *deceptive* description of them (hence our scare quotes around 'friends'). Socrates is simply making use, temporarily, of the fact that the things in question '*are called*', have the name (*keklerai*, 220E2), 'friends for the sake of another friend'. (The transmitted text of the sentence as a whole looks less than completely convincing, even in Burnet's version. But we have no neat solutions to propose, and as so often in such cases the sense of the argument is clear enough.)

¹⁰⁵ As suggested e.g. by Lamb in a footnote to the Loeb edition of the *Lysis*. See below: what is taken by Lamb and others to be a simple confusion on Socrates' part is actually a substantial inference.

¹⁰⁶ A striking result: those other, so-called, *phila* were *phila* for the sake of another good, while the true *philon* turns out to be *philon* for the sake of the bad(!).

The good can be dropped from the ontology. Socrates' (Plato's) resistance to this, we shall argue, is because *he* insists that, on the contrary, it is the good that is the only real thing here, and it is the bad that can be dropped. There is no such thing as the bad. The bad, as in Augustine, is merely privation of good.

Menexenus seems to see what Socrates is up to: the position they've reached (that the good is desired only as a means to eliminating the bad) is simply absurd – as Socrates now goes on to point out, perhaps on behalf of both of them:¹⁰⁷

'Good heavens ['By Zeus!'], I said, 'if bad disappears, will there no longer even be any being hungry, or **221AI** being thirsty, or anything else of that sort? Or will there be hunger, if indeed there are human beings and the other sorts of living creatures, but not hunger that is *harmful* (*blabera ge*)? And so with thirst, and the other sorts of desires – there will be these desires, but they won't be bad, given that bad will have disappeared? Or is the question "What, I wonder [*pote?*], **221A5** will there be or not be under those circumstances?" ridiculous? For who knows the answer? This much in any case we do know, that even as things are (*nun*) it is possible to be hungry and be harmed, and possible too to be hungry and be benefited. Isn't that so?'

'Yes, absolutely.'

'Then¹⁰⁸ it's possible also to be thirsty and **221BI** to desire (*epithumein*) any of the other things of this sort and sometimes to desire them beneficially, sometimes harmfully, and sometimes neither?'

'Yes, very much so.'

¹⁰⁷ Rowe originally thought that Menexenus ought to be protesting at this point ('How on earth could the *true* friend be a friend "for the sake of something inimical"?'), and that there was a touch of impatience in what Socrates says next ('By Zeus! . . .'). But probably it fits what Menexenus says ('It doesn't seem so to me . . . at least if it's put as it is now') better if we suppose that he is keeping pace with Socrates, and seeing the impossibility of the position on which they'd previously agreed, i.e. that the *philon* was *philon because of the bad*. (Further evidence – if evidence were needed – that Menexenus is no mere party, any more than Lysis is.)

¹⁰⁸ I.e. if we allow that thirst and the other (relevant sorts of) desires will go on all fours with hunger (cf. A1–4 'Or will there be hunger . . . And so with thirst, and the other sorts of desires . . .').

¹⁰⁹ That is, we take it, it is possible for *epithumiai* of the sorts in question – which are of/for the good, because that is what all desire/love is of/for: cf. n. 16 above, and see Chapter 6 below – either actually to have beneficial consequences, or to have harmful consequences, or to have consequences that are neither good nor bad. The idea of the neither good nor bad as applied to desires takes them one at a time: this desire in *these* circumstances is good/bad because, in these circumstances, its results are good/bad; that desire in *those* circumstances is neither good nor bad because its results are neutral. In this, there is a clear contrast with the use of the expression 'the neither good nor bad' in connection with the claims that the neither good nor bad loves the good, and that such intermediaries as gold and silver, cups, wine, doctors, or health are neither good nor bad. For in these latter cases being neither good nor bad – we shall argue – is a matter of failing to be either *always good* or *always bad*.

'Then if bad things disappear,¹¹⁰ the sorts of things that actually aren't (*mē tunchanei onta*) bad – why does it belong to them to disappear along 221B5 with the bad?'

'It doesn't at all.'

'In that case (*ara*) there will be the neither good nor bad desires (*epithumiai*) even if bad things disappear.'¹¹¹

'It appears so.'

'Well (*oun*),¹¹² is it possible for a person desiring, and feeling passion for (*eran*),¹¹³ the thing he desires and feels passion for not to love (*philein*)?'

'It doesn't seem so to me.'

'In that case even if 221C1 bad things had disappeared, it seems, there will be some friends (*phil'atta*).'¹¹⁴

'Yes.'

'There wouldn't be, if the bad really were cause of a thing's being a friend (*philon*) – one thing wouldn't be a friend (*philon*) to another, if that had disappeared. For once a cause has disappeared I imagine (*pou*) it would be¹¹⁵ impossible for that thing of which this cause was cause still 221C5 to be there.'

'What you say is correct.' (220E6–221C5)

The basic shape of the argument here is pretty clear: even without bad things around, there would still be desires, and so things that are 'friends', *phila*; but if the bad were the cause of things' being *phila*, that couldn't happen. So the bad isn't the cause of things' being *phila*. Socrates at first continues with the line of thought he began at 220C1, which asks what things would be like if the bad 'took itself off' (*ekpodōn . . . apelthoi*, 'went off out of the way': 220C3). Would there really be no hunger, thirst and the

¹¹⁰ I.e. if they do disappear, at some time in the future: how will things look, from where we are now? There should be no real significance in the shift from 'if bad things *were to* disappear' to 'if bad things disappear', in itself, since this shift has already occurred in 220E7; nevertheless, we are presently supposed to be looking at things '(even) as they are now' (221A6), as opposed to thinking how they *might* be in a different world – which is somehow supposed to be a ridiculous question (A4–5). We discuss the issues here at length in the main text below.

¹¹¹ I.e. the desires that had neutral results. By Socrates' own lights, there would also still be good desires; but of course on the thesis he is currently engaged in rejecting the good is only a cure for the bad (220D3, 4: sc. so that good would disappear along with the bad).

¹¹² That desiring and feeling passion imply loving seems to be an independent premiss, not derived from what precedes (sc. so that the *oun* is not a 'then', 'therefore').

¹¹³ Since this is the verb typically used of sexual passion, sex will evidently now be one of the 'things of the [same] sort as' (the objects of) thirst (221A7–B1: 'Then it's possible also to be thirsty and to desire any of the other things of this sort . . .').

¹¹⁴ I.e. some cases of loving (*philein*).

¹¹⁵ The manuscripts give a text that could in principle be read as suggesting that what is said here was previously said/agreed (another 'philosophical' imperfect: cf. n. 103 above), but given that it hasn't previously been said, the sense must be as we have it ('it *would* be impossible . . .'). We might need Goldbacher's conjecture for this (adding *an* after *adunaton*); on the other hand we might not: see Goodwin, *MT*: 151 ff., on 'Apodosis without *an*'.

other desires we share with animals (including sexual desire)?¹¹⁶ Or would there be hunger, just no hunger that was actually *harmful*, i.e. none where the lack of food turned out to be harmful? But then Socrates wonders whether the question isn't *geloion*, 'ridiculous' or 'laughable'; who knows what will or will not obtain under the circumstances in question (i.e. if the bad went away)?

The point of this move seems to be as follows. Socrates has been trying to reduce the proposal at b8 (the good is loved *because of the bad*) to absurdity, by imagining a counterfactual situation in which the bad no longer existed. Thus: the good would no longer be of any use to us, 'for its own sake' (220D6–7), despite being that for the sake of which other things are loved – that is, thanks to the 'because of the bad', which would as it were trump the 'for the sake of'.¹¹⁷ Again, take away the bad, and we'd apparently be left with the possibility of humans and other animals that didn't desire at all; or would they just have desires that couldn't turn out badly? But now Socrates starts to worry about this approach. Perhaps the worry in question comes to this. If the situation being imagined is a counterfactual one, why should one assume that a world (counterfactually) without bad things in it would in fact operate normally in other respects? If we can think one feature of the ordinary world away, why not others? So, he appears to be saying, we need to go back to the world as it is, and start from there.

At any rate, that appears to be the intention behind Socrates' saying

'Or is the question "What, I wonder, will there be or not be under those circumstances?" ridiculous? For who knows the answer? This much in any case we do know, that even as things are it is possible to be hungry and be harmed, and possible too to be hungry and be benefited. Isn't that so?' (221A3–7)

We cannot indeed see any point in these remarks if they are not to have the implication that our considerations are to bear solely on this world. But the problem then seems to remain that Socrates is asking us to think away there being bad things: is that not to be leaving the actual world again?

Here is one possibility that occurred to us that we think might well be right. Socrates wants us to think about the real world, but only about certain parts of the real world. That is, he wants us to think about two kinds of desires in the real world, while leaving a third kind to one side. These kinds of desires are characterized in terms of the results that come from acting on them; the kinds of desires he wants us to consider are desires which have beneficial results (the good desires), and desires which have neutral results

¹¹⁶ See n. 113 above. ¹¹⁷ Cf. text following n. 105 above.

(the neither good nor bad desires). Ignoring for the moment desires that have harmful results (the bad desires), we ask about these other two kinds of desires, good, and neither good nor bad, whether there is any reason to suppose that they would continue to exist even if there were no bad desires. Now we need not take this as moving to another world. We could just be asking whether the existence *in this world* of the good desires and of the neither good nor bad desires is in any way causally dependent on the existence of the bad desires. If not, then we can say of this world that these two species of desires do not exist because of the bad.

But there is still a problem – at least, there is a problem on certain natural assumptions. It is this: what if the bad is not just a matter of harmful results, but is a certain (as it were) positive entity which exists on its own in the real world? (This is the idea we were exploring a few pages earlier, one that treated the bad as no mere privation of the good, but as itself a positive entity in the world.) Of course, if the bad *is* just a matter of harmful results, then our preceding argument stands, for all there will be to there being bad in the world will be there being desires that lead to bad results. But what if *bad* were this positive entity, evil, existing on its own in the real world? Then it could still be the case that good desires were precisely good by virtue of dealing appropriately with this evil, and Socrates' argument would not have shown what it set out to show.

There seems to be only one way to extricate Plato from the difficulty here, and that is to suppose that the presence of bad in the world consists entirely of bad results produced by human desires – just the result that would be anticipated on the line of thought we attributed to Socrates a few pages back, according to which the bad is merely the privation of good, the good being the one positive entity involved.¹¹⁸ If this is right, then the difficulty is overcome. That, at any rate, is the best we can do with respect to Socrates' apparent desire to eat his cake and have it too – his apparent desire *not* to be speaking counterfactually, or about anything other than the real world, while at the same time using an apparent counterfactual about a world in which there is no such thing as the bad.

To sum up: Socrates seemed to spend a lot of time in 217A–218C setting up that scenario in which 'friendship' involved the *philos* subject's 'loving',

¹¹⁸ Such a view will be even more persuasive if it turns out that there are no *people* who are anything other than neither good nor bad. For the view that there are evil people surely stands or falls with the idea that the world contains a positive entity, evil. To put it in another way: *nothing in the real world is always* bad. Take sickness, for example, and Socrates' proposal that in certain cases, especially with people who are ignorant, they may be better off sick than they would be if they were healthy, since their very health may tempt them into silly actions they would have been saved from if ill. (That is why health will be neither good nor bad.) The point is precisely that it is an ill wind that blows no good.

philein, the *philos/on* object because of the presence of bad, where bad was ‘present’ without the subject’s actually *being* bad. And since ‘because of the bad’ became part of the general formulation of Socrates’ account of *philia* and the *philon*, we had every reason for supposing that every case of *philia*, and so every case of desire (see now 221B7–8), would involve some sort of bad, *kakon*, in the same sort of way. Now Socrates has discovered desires that don’t involve bad at all. Does the bad, then, play no role in *philia*? We see no reason why not. After all, in the real world, there will be desires that lead to bad results, and in a world that contains such desires, avoiding those results could itself be a part of the good. So such bad as there is in the real world – harmful results, not a positive evil – can play a part in *philia*. And presumably to say that we – all humans – are neither good nor bad is to say that we can be harmed, even by not attaining to the good.

So what is the good that desiring subjects lack? This returns us immediately to the question we postponed, about the identity of the ‘first friend’ – if this is the only true ‘friend’, and it’s the good that’s ‘friend’ (220B7–8 again).¹¹⁹

(C + D): 219B5–221C5 and the identity of the ‘first friend’

(i) First candidate: the ‘form of the good’

So: what is this ‘first friend’? The candidate that has sprung to the minds of many readers of the *Lysis* is the Platonic ‘form of the good’.¹²⁰ that object which, Socrates tells us in the *Republic*, is the subject of the highest study, and is – roughly speaking – what gives shape and, as one might put it, meaning to everything in the world. Quite a lot of what has been said in 219B5–220B5 immediately recalls the sorts of language that are typically used of ‘forms’ in other dialogues: that the ‘so-called’ ‘friends’ are ‘images

¹¹⁹ 217A–218C makes its point about the presence of bad by means of two examples: the sick person desiring health, and the ignorant person desiring wisdom. 219B5 ff. raises doubts about whether health is to be regarded as a good, or as a ‘friend’, by making it something *philon* for the sake of some other *philon*, 219C2–4: the suggestion may be dialectical in origin (if ‘the *philon* is *philon* for the sake of the *philon*’, 219B2–3, and health is *philon*, then health must be *philon* ‘for the sake of some *philon*’ – and 219C3–4 derives this conclusion specifically from ‘our previous agreement’), but it is nowhere controversial. Once again, then (cf. n. 46 above), we should not assume that the Socrates of the *Lysis* will ultimately grant that health is good and sickness bad. There is still no corresponding counter-indication to his suggestion that ignorance is bad and wisdom good – a matter of some importance, since we will be suggesting that wisdom is a candidate for being the first friend. (That in spite of the fact that wisdom seems plainly enough to be a means to the good which is happiness.)

¹²⁰ See n. 78 above. Another closely related candidate will be the form of beauty described by Diotima in *Symposium* 210E–212A.

(*eidōla*), as it were' of the true 'friend';¹²¹ that they can deceive us into thinking that they *are* that true friend;¹²² and so on. And after all, the 'friend' *is*, here, the good.

But the question 'is the "first friend" a form?' (or, what we take to be the same question, 'is the "first friend" the form of the good?') is neither as straightforward, nor as useful, as it might look. As a matter of fact, both of us (Penner and Rowe) believe that if Platonic forms in general, and the 'form of the good' in particular, are properly understood, it is far from inconceivable that the question (is the 'first friend' a form?) should receive a positive answer. Some might wish us to be even more circumspect here, given the confusing state of the modern literature on what the forms are. We will, however, give a partial answer to our question – 'is the "first friend" a form?' – in Chapter II below.

(ii) A second, 'minimalist', candidate

Another candidate for 'first friend' which some might find more promising – though we do not – is one that might be termed the 'minimalist' one: 'minimalist', that is, in terms of commitments, metaphysical or otherwise (the third, and our favoured, candidate, discussed below, might be the corresponding 'maximalist' candidate). What is *philon* 'first', according to this alternative reading, is just any of the many things that we might be thought of as desiring, but not for the sake of anything else: our children's health, a comfortable and secure life, or whatever else it might be. On this account, there will be an attribute of being the first friend, which will belong to each and every one of such things, on condition that we do desire them, and that we do not desire them for the sake of anything else. (This candidate will of course only make the shortlist if there can in fact be a plurality of such things; that we are considering the candidate implies no commitment on our part to that possibility.)

What is there in favour of this interpretation? At first glance, it fits the generally spare, formulaic-looking, sort of argumentation that characterizes the whole of the present section of the *Lysis* – the sort that gives us proposals such as 'it's the neither good nor bad [sc. whatever that is] that's friend of the good [whatever that is] because of the bad [whatever that is]'. (So the first friend will be what we don't desire for the sake of anything else [whatever

¹²¹ See the entry for 'paradigms' in the General Index to Fine 1993, which will give access to a wide range of the relevant Platonic texts concerning images.

¹²² The *locus classicus* for a similar idea about 'particulars' (particular beautiful things) deceiving us into thinking they are the corresponding form (the form of beauty) is *Republic* V, 474B–480A.

it turns out to be on any occasion: cf. 220A4 ‘whatever it comes to light as being?’].) But we deny that the talk of the neither good nor bad, the good, and the bad is in this way minimalist (another name for *whatever is desired*, and nothing more). What we find in the dialogue about the ‘good’, the ‘bad’ and the ‘neither good nor bad’ would be purely formal in this way only if Socrates had nothing specific in mind for what it is to count as neither-good-nor-bad, good, or bad (cf. also n. 125 below). This we believe to be untrue in any case: sickness is at any rate *prima facie* bad; ‘terminal’ ignorance is unconditionally bad. And in fact we humans appear to be the central case of things that are neither good nor bad.

Firmer support for the ‘minimalist’ interpretation of the first friend, for anyone tempted in that direction, will come from the presence in the text of plural – at any rate two – examples of cases involving ‘first friends’ (if that is what they are meant to be): the father/son case in 219D5–220A1 and the case of gold and silver, or money, in 220A1–5. If the father ‘makes much of’ the cup and the wine for the sake of the son, then, provided that ‘making much of’ implies loving (*philein*), it seems reasonable enough to take the son and his health as something he thinks a ‘friend’ for its own sake, in this particular set of circumstances; similarly with whatever it is that we want to buy or do with the gold and silver (‘what money can buy’). Socrates will then just be asking us to distinguish what it is that’s the ‘first friend’ *in each case* from what is for the sake of that, as cup and wine are for the sake of the son.

But we need to go more cautiously here. What we have so far, in this context, treated as ‘examples’ are in fact not presented as such at all in the text. They are rather presented as *analogies*. Socrates offers the father/son case, in 219D6–220A1, in order to persuade Menexenus of the plausibility of the proposal in 219D2–5 that some of the things we ordinarily call ‘friends’ aren’t really so, and that the only true ‘friend’ is that other one, the ‘first’. And he does so by using the terms *peri pollou poieisthai*, ‘make much of’, *peri pantos poieisthai*, ‘make everything of’, and *protiman*, ‘prefer’ (D7: ‘put a higher assessment on?’), i.e. without *philein* and its cognates, which do not appear in this context at all. He then supports the claim drawn from the father-son case – the claim, that is, that all ‘concern’ (or ‘attention’, ‘zeal’: *spoudē*) in such cases is directed, not towards the things ‘procured’, but towards the thing for the sake of which they are procured – with the further case of what money can buy and our attitude towards such things, using the same language, i.e. ‘making much of’ rather than ‘loving’; and he then proceeds to ask ‘Then does the same account apply to the friend (*to philon*), too?’ (220A6–7). If he had wanted to treat the two cases as examples,

or illustrations, he would surely have asked, instead, ‘but is it possible to make much of something without *loving* it?’, and so concluded directly from there that what we love is that *for* which we make much of other things. That he carefully keeps the two examples apart from the subject of ‘the friend’ is something we should not only notice but, apparently, respect. Just as what we *really* make much of is the thing for the sake of which we procure cups, or money, or whatever, so – this is the argument in 219–20 – what we really love is the thing for the sake of which we say we love other things. Thus far at least, then, it seems unsafe to conclude that the poisoned boy’s health, or indeed that team of fine chariot-horses that the gold and silver can be exchanged for, are meant to serve as decent examples of ‘first friends’. Anyone could accept that the father doesn’t care *in the slightest* about the cup – whether it’s a fancy example, or a crude piece of pottery the slave uses; almost anyone could accept that money is only useful for what you can do with it. Well, says Socrates, what *I* want to say about ‘friends’ is just like that.

Now those ordinary, sensible people to whose views he has just appealed (‘it’s like when we all of us say we make much of money . . .’) could easily be imagined as registering a protest at this point. ‘But surely, Socrates, whatever one says about sons or chariot-horses, you won’t seriously be questioning, will you, that fathers love their sons? So the son *must* be a “first friend” in any case, and if you do mean to put that in doubt, then you’re up to something pretty peculiar – if not in terms of some so far unexplained metaphysical theory, then in terms of some equally unexplained, and extraordinary, account of moral psychology.’¹²³ (And if the son is a ‘first friend’, what we want to buy with our money will be another . . .; so, lots of ‘first friends’?) This is, we grant, a very natural position to take up – especially for modern philosophers. In many ways, the insistence that a son or daughter is a paradigm of something unconditionally loved, in the way the ‘first friend’ is, is emblematic of modern treatments of friendship. Nonetheless, we do not believe that it is at all what Socrates has in mind; and we shall argue accordingly. For the moment we merely recall to the reader’s mind the way in which in 214E–215C Socrates has insisted that there must be something, some good thing, that the loved object/person has to offer the one loving. This surely suggests that we should rule out the possibility that it is the view of Socrates here that sons (health, security . . .) are ‘first friends’.

¹²³ This is a paraphrase of what one reader of our first draft (M. M. McCabe) actually did protest at this point.

To see what might be involved here, let us return to the Great King and his son, and offer the King a choice between his own happiness and the son. Such a choice is likely to be greeted with the response ‘But in the case Socrates offers us, the King’s own happiness precisely consists in the health of his son.’ Quite so. What the combination of the two cases shows us is that the ‘first friend’ here is not just the son or the son’s health, but *the health of the son in which the King’s, the father’s, happiness consists*. But if so, it is moot whether, for the case where the son’s health and the father’s happiness come apart (i.e. where there are other factors that prevent that part of the father’s happiness that includes his son’s health and happiness from coinciding with other things in which, as things now are, the father’s happiness consists), the ‘first friend’ for the father is the son’s health that does not make the father happy or the father’s happiness that does not make the son healthy. In short, the example of the father and the son in 219D–E can only have a limited function – that of illustrating where, as between ‘things for the sake of (something else)’ and ends, one’s ‘concern’ (attention, zeal) truly rests; it is actually incapable of illustrating what it is to be a ‘first friend’. Any inclination to suppose that it does illustrate that will derive from a sense that a son’s happiness, for a father, just ought to be a ‘first friend’. We notice, however, that hardly anyone would propose what money can buy, Socrates’ next example, for that role. That his arguments about making much of one’s son are not intended to give examples of ‘first friends’ might even be suggested by his introducing as a co-ordinate example of what one ‘makes much of’ possessions we can purchase.

(iii) A third, and preferred, candidate¹²⁴

The last paragraph represents one particular version of a general, and (we think) unsurmountable, objection to the ‘minimalist’ solution: that it takes the treatment of the ‘first friend’ too much in isolation. Abstract though that treatment may superficially appear to be, in many respects, it nevertheless takes place against a background in which, firstly, the universal object of ‘friendship’, and desire, has been identified as the good (*to agathon*: what is good), and in which, secondly, goodness has been quietly but consistently associated with one thing in particular: knowledge and wisdom. So most recently, and signally, in 217E–218C, when a general discussion about badness and the effects of its presence ends with a lengthy illustration of its implications exclusively in terms of ignorance and wisdom. The ‘badness’

¹²⁴ See nn. 58, 61 above. We have dealt with the other candidates first because they have seemed to others to be strong contenders; in our considered view the first is hardly determinate enough to qualify for the start-line, and the second falls decisively not far into the race.

of the thing that discussion took in 217A–B as its first example, i.e. sickness, is put into question by 219B5 ff., when health is by implication denied the status of good; but at no time does Socrates suggest anything other than that ignorance is bad and wisdom good.¹²⁵

And it is to the subject of wisdom (*sophia, phronēsis*) and/or knowledge (*epistēmē, technē*: all four terms and/or their cognates appear interchangeable),¹²⁶ and its importance, that the *Lysis* keeps returning. That is where it starts, if not in Socrates' walk from the Academy to the gymnasium of the Lyceum, and his stopping-off at the new wrestling-school, then certainly with the reference to the teacher Miccus in 204A ('your friend and admirer', 'no mean person', but a good enough *sophistēs*, 'professional in the wisdom-business': 204A), whose expertise Socrates contrasts with his own lack of it (204B–C). Next we have a lot of (further) talk about expertise in 'erotics' (itself treated as a form of *sophia*: *ta erōtika . . . sophos*, 206AI); then that long initial exchange between Socrates and Lysis, which centres on knowledge and ends by connecting it with goodness and usefulness; then wisdom turns up at 212D as the last of a list of objects of non-reciprocal *philia* – and Lysis himself is immediately identified as a *philosophos* (213D7); in the following section, starting from the poets and the cosmologists, experts figure prominently (213E–216B; 215C6 treats them implicitly as 'good', *agathoi*). The stretch at 217E–218C, then, which we singled out in our last paragraph, is only one in a whole line of passages in the dialogue that point to wisdom or knowledge as what *matters, makes the difference*. And all the time, of course, we are surely to understand Socrates himself as asking his questions in the spirit of that same *philosophia* that he says he admired in Lysis. All of this and more lies behind Socrates' question at 220CI–7:

'if of the three things we were talking about just now, good, bad, and neither good nor bad, two were still left, but the third, the bad, were to take itself off out of the way and affected nothing, whether body, or soul, or the other things, the ones we say, themselves in themselves, are neither bad nor good, is it the case that then the good would not be *useful* to us at all, but would have become *useless*?'

¹²⁵ See nn. 46, 119 above. One is accustomed to hearing from interpreters remarks of the sort 'Here Aristotle is making a purely formal point/purely logical point.' Whatever the merit of such remarks in relation to Aristotle – rather less, we think, than normally supposed – we actually doubt whether such remarks are ever appropriate in the case of Plato.

¹²⁶ So e.g. the initial conversation between Socrates and Lysis begins from – or at any rate immediately following – the unasked question at 207D1–2 ('which of you is jester and wiser (*sophōteros*)?'), and concludes that Lysis, at least, isn't *sophos* (210D1), isn't capable of *phronein* (210D5, 6), i.e. isn't *phronimos* (210B1), by demonstrating that he lacks certain specific skills ('I know about/am expert in, *epistamai*, these things but not those', 209C2).

Strictly speaking, of course, the reference of the question is wholly general. But it too has to be read in its total context – as has the following reference to ‘us who are between the bad and the good’: ‘is it [sc. the good] loved like this, because of the bad, by us who are between the bad and the good, and does it have no *use*, itself for the sake of itself?’ (220D5–6). It would, surely, be a singular act of abnegation not to think back to those earlier passages that talked about usefulness and uselessness – which in turn will take us back to the original connection between usefulness, goodness and wisdom, made in that first conversation between Socrates and Lysis.

Another similar – implicit – backward reference (to anticipate a little)¹²⁷ will be found in 221D6–E5, when we suddenly find ourselves confronted with the proposal that the good that is the object of our desire is what belongs, is *oikeion*, is ‘akin’, to us. The attentive reader – any, at least, as attentive as Lysis¹²⁸ – will immediately recall at this point the purple passage at 210A9–C4 that linked what is ‘ours’ with what will bring us benefit, and what will bring us benefit with what we ‘acquire intelligence about’:

‘This is how it is, then,’ I said, ‘my friend Lysis: with respect to the things about which we become good thinkers (*phronimoī*), everyone will hand them over to us, whether Greeks or non-Greeks, men or women, and we shall do in these cases whatever we wish, and no one will deliberately stand in our way, but we shall be at the same time free ourselves, in the cases in question, and controllers of others, and these will be *our* things (*hēmetera*), because we shall benefit from them; with respect to the things about which we do not acquire intelligence (*nous*), on the other hand, neither will anyone hand it over to us to do in relation to *them* what appears to us to be the thing to do, but everyone will stand in our way to whatever extent they can, not only people not belonging to us (*allotrioī*), but our father and our mother, and anything else that may belong more closely [be *oikeioteron*] to us than these, and we ourselves in such cases shall be subject to others, and the things in question will not belong to us [will be *allotria*], because we shall derive no benefit from them.’

Provided that the things that are ‘ours’ are also the things that ‘belong’ to us, then the connection between 221D–E and 210A–C looks assured. But there can surely be no doubt in any case that ‘our own’, *hēmeteros*, is just ‘what belongs’ (*oikeios*), with the restriction ‘to us’ (which is no restriction at all, since the ‘we’ here is generalizing); if confirmation were needed, not only does ‘belonging to another’, *allotrios*, here function as the contrary of both, but when *oikeios* is first introduced in 221D–E it is understood precisely as ‘belonging to us’ (see Chapter 6 below). It is not too much to

¹²⁷ The problems of dividing up a continuous argument are again in evidence here.

¹²⁸ See Socrates’ judgement of him at 213D, which will be amply confirmed in 222A (Chapter 6 below).

say that 210A–C provides, prospectively, a gloss on 221D–E: we are not only entitled but must surely be expected to bring that earlier context to bear on this later one. To be sure, Menexenus missed that first bit of conversation. But we were there, and so was Lysis.¹²⁹

What is *philon* to us (truly *philon*, truly an object of love) is what is good, and what is good is what is beneficial to us: so much of Socrates' position ought to be beyond dispute in any case. What 210A–C gives us is, yet again, that connection with *knowledge*. Only those things we 'become sound thinkers about', and 'acquire intelligence about', will benefit us, and so be 'ours', 'belong to us'. In its original context, the point applies specifically to things like chariot-driving, or controlling mules, or spinning wool, but naturally Lysis, and indeed anyone other than professional charioteers, muleteers, or women like Lysis' mother, will have their sights set higher than that: the 'benefit' they'll be looking for will come from loftier sources. In any case, the point is put in wholly general terms. *Whatever* is going to benefit us will be something we are 'sound thinkers' or 'have intelligence' about. Or to put it another way, there is nothing that will benefit us until we know how to handle it. (What guarantees that we will act in accordance with that knowledge? If what we all desire is the good, then we cannot fail to use our knowledge of the good correctly. Not so for any other kind of knowledge.) Now our desires, according to 220E6 ff., can have results that are good, bad, or neither good nor bad: the point seems to be developed in relation to hunger, thirst and other desires, like sexual desire, that we might classify as 'physiological', but there seems no reason why it should not be extended to desires in general. It is hardly daring to propose to put this together with 210A–C, and interpret Socrates as proposing that what makes the difference between our 'desiring beneficially' and our 'desiring harmfully' – as with our handling horses, mules, spindles – is *knowledge*.

Hence that original, innocent-looking set of opening questions Socrates puts to Lysis and Menexenus in 207B–D: they argue about which of them is older – do they also argue about which of them is the nobler, the more beautiful, the richer? Socrates didn't get to put his next question to them, about which of them is *juster* and *wiser*; but as we can now see, reading back,¹³⁰ it is the last question that is the crucial one. Only if the boys have

¹²⁹ See Chapter 6 below on the differing reactions of the two boys at 222A4, shortly after the re-introduction of the idea of 'belonging', *oikeiotēs* in 221E.

¹³⁰ Here is something we need not argue for again: the legitimacy of *reading back*, or *re-reading* (or its oral equivalent: cf. Socrates' instruction to Lysis at 211A9–B2 to remember the conversation the two of them have just had, so that he can repeat it to Menexenus). Plato's works are likely on anyone's account to be too dense and too complex in texture to be assimilated the first time round.

wisdom, and know how to use other things, will it make sense to dispute about those other things, and perhaps not even then: perhaps wisdom would show that they were not, after all, worth disputing about.¹³¹ That would certainly be enough to make the wise person also just, in terms of the distribution of ‘goods’.

All of this confirms that Socrates knows all along, more or less, how things will turn out for the argument. For after all, if 210A–C anticipates later stages in the argument, it’s Socrates that’s doing the anticipating as much as Plato. Nonetheless we should still take his profession of ignorance, or ‘uselessness’ (204C1), quite seriously. He may be able to recognize a lover and a beloved; he may be able to see what it is that we all love – knowledge. He cannot claim (yet) to have that knowledge himself, since otherwise, according to 218A–B, he wouldn’t any longer be a lover of wisdom, and worse still, according to the same passage, and 220D5–6, he would no longer be a member of the human race.¹³² Yet he wants it, desperately.¹³³ And so he should, according to our reading, since on that reading what Socrates is saying is that that’s what *everyone* wants (knowledge or wisdom).

Now this is, clearly, different from the ‘minimalist’ position on the ‘first friend’, in two crucial respects. Firstly, it commits Socrates, as the other view does not, to the view that when there is desire or love, the true object of that desire or love will always be *determinate*. But secondly it commits him, as the other view need not, to holding that that object will, in every case, be a *real good*. That is, it will be *objectively* good, as opposed to being what this or that particular agent happens to think he or she wants, ultimately, in

At any rate that will be true for us moderns: a Greek audience of the classical period might well have been better at it. But the example we are dealing with here (‘which of you is *wiser*?’, as we shall see immediately below, but also and especially in Chapter 9 below, is only one of a number of anticipations, signals, or hints in the early pages of the dialogue of what is to come later. None of this, naturally, could be seen by *anyone* except a clairvoyant without their going back to it.

¹³¹ One should perhaps notice that Socrates’ last, unasked, question to the boys is different from all its predecessors except the innocent first (‘Which of you is older? ‘We dispute about that’): not ‘do you dispute about which of you is . . .’, but ‘which of you is . . .’.

¹³² For the same curious complex of ideas, see *Symposium* 203E–204A. Being wise is evidently a stable state (*Protagoras* 356D–E, with *Meno* 97D–98A, *Euthyphro* 15 B–C), which – according to the *Symposium* – is beyond human beings. However there is a difference in the *Symposium* account. *Lysis* 217E–218a will have the apparently unfortunate consequence that recovering one’s health means ceasing to desire it; whereas the Socrates of the *Symposium* closes this apparent gap, at 200A–E, by proposing that when the healthy person says he desires what he has, he has in mind that he desires to have it in the future. So this is not a true counter-example to the rule that one only desires what one lacks. (But before we conclude that the *Symposium* is here ahead of the *Lysis*, we should recall that the latter throws doubt on whether health is desirable for its own sake: 219B5 ff. again.)

¹³³ In the list of types of lovers in 212D, horse-lovers, quail-lovers, dog-lovers, wine-lovers, exercise-lovers and wisdom-lovers (*philosophoi*), there isn’t any doubt in which category he belongs. Wisdom, then, will be his good – true? – friend (what he wants more than anything: 211E3–8)?

this or that situation. The *Lysis* up to this point has been working towards a view of ‘friendship’, or desire, that has all agents desiring the same thing, i.e. the good, and if this left any room at all for the possibility that some might actually desire the bad while *thinking* it was good, that possibility is clearly ruled out if knowledge – about good and bad things – is what we (all) desire, and we only desire the good. But then again, why should anyone ever want anything that wasn’t his or her real good, but only some substitute for it? This is the fundamental question that seems to lie behind a passage like *Lysis* 214E–215C, on use and need as factors in *philia*.

Of course thinking that something is good for one might, in general, look like a perfectly respectable reason for wanting it; but if goodness or badness in people is understood in the *Lysis*, as we suppose, in terms of the possession of knowledge and ignorance, then there will hardly be space for the apparent good – whether in 214E–215C or indeed anywhere else. If this position – that all agents in fact desire the real good – looks to the reader, as it looked to Aristotle in most contexts,¹³⁴ an untenable one, it is nevertheless an absolutely central part of the thesis that Socrates is working out in the *Lysis*, and of what he is asking us to take seriously. And, as 212A–213C shows (‘when one person loves another, which is *philos* of which? . . .’), he thinks there are real problems with the opposing view: that, he wants to say, is what’s untenable. That is to say, it is not that Socrates is merely ignoring, or ignorant of, the obvious, nor that he’s deliberately setting out to be perverse; he knows exactly what he is doing, and where we, his readers, are likely to be, and he is setting out a deliberate *challenge* to us. For us to respond ‘but he’s just obviously wrong’ is to miss the whole point of the exercise; or if he is so obviously wrong (which we, Penner and Rowe, are far from thinking), at least we shall have to decide what to do with his arguments.

So here is a first, tentative shot at what Socrates might want to identify as the ‘first friend’: the content of the knowledge or wisdom required to manage things, or our lives, in such a way as to secure what is good/beneficial for us. But now there is an objection. Won’t knowledge or wisdom in that case itself be one of those things that (we say) are ‘friends’ *for the sake of something else* that is itself good, and won’t that something else have to be

¹³⁴ See *Nicomachean Ethics* III.4, and our Epilogue. (But also see *NE* I.1–2, which a reader would make nonsense of if he or she interpreted it solely in terms of the apparent good; also *Metaphysics* XII, 1072a25–8.) Our remarks about Aristotle also apply to some modern interpreters of Plato, who are even content to have Plato inconsistently embracing both the view that all desire is for the real good, and also, in some passages, the view they suppose *truer*, that instead desire is sometimes for apparent good.

the ‘first friend’? How, indeed, given Socrates’ uncompromising analysis in 219B–220B, can knowledge be anything that is truly *philon*, loved and desired, at all? So Socrates isn’t a lover of wisdom. What he really desires is the good life, or happiness. And after all (the objector might well continue), didn’t he invite us to take this very point, in his original conversation with Lysis – especially through the way in which he introduced the topic for discussion there? ‘Do your parents love you? If they do, don’t they want you to be as happy (*eudaimōn*) as possible? If so, why do they prevent you from doing what you want?’ But ‘doing what you want’ in the absence of knowledge will evidently lead to the wrong results. So what one needs is knowledge; but what one needs it *for* is evidently in order to get what one wants, or, in a word, happiness (*eudaimonia*).¹³⁵

So why isn’t the ‘first *philon*’ this other thing, happiness? It cannot be said that the *Lysis* gives us much direct help towards answering this question. The style of the investigation is too little intent on giving us the answer as opposed to making us work it out on our own. One thing that can be said with certainty is that if means are *always* inferior to ends, and knowledge/wisdom is merely a means to happiness, that would make a complete mess of Socrates’ argument so far. We could perhaps put up with the shock of discovering, all of a sudden, that *philosophia*, ‘love of wisdom’ (apparently what has driven the discussion as a whole: cf. 213D) was a misnomer, and that it wasn’t wisdom after all that the philosopher loves. But what would be quite intolerable is that if wisdom really isn’t a ‘friend’, then it won’t be good either, and how could the knowledge of good and bad not be a good thing? That is, how could it not be a good thing, if what we all desire is the good? Such knowledge would, presumably, allow us to select the good and avoid the bad on a reliable basis. If nothing else, this would ruin Socrates’ claim that things that are (said to be) ‘friends’ for the sake of something else are not ‘friends’ at all: why on earth, then, should he have tried it on in the first place?

So there ought to be a way out, and wisdom/knowledge *isn’t* meant to be a mere (so-called) ‘friend’ for the sake of something (cf. 220B6–7). We might suppose that Plato himself is still feeling his way, and has no complete theory to offer: maybe he has just not got that far. But it would be uncharitable in the extreme to leave him with the mess just outlined, when he has Socrates show no awareness at all of being in any trouble, at any rate just yet. Despite what we have called a lack of specifics in the context as

¹³⁵ For happiness as the one thing not chosen for the sake of anything else, see *Symposium* 204E–205A; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.7, 1097a34–b1.

a whole, there is no escaping the fact that the *Lysis* is designed to suggest a fairly particular view at least of *the kind of thing* that is ultimately desirable: it is (1) what is good, or beneficial; (2) on the easy assumption that happiness is a matter of having what is good, it is also happiness; but (3) it crucially involves wisdom or knowledge. Given that there are questions about the relation between (3) and (1)+(2), it is hard to suppose that Socrates has just failed to notice them; how could he have *failed to notice* that as well as depriving things like money of inherent value, the introduction of the ‘first friend’ was also in danger of devaluing the very thing that he apparently sets his own sights on, if not his heart?¹³⁶

If Plato wants to set up a conundrum, he usually finds a way of signalling it,¹³⁷ and there are no such signals here. So it is not that. The only remaining alternative appears to be that somehow or other (1), (2) and (3) are – according to the Socrates of the *Lysis* – all compatible with each other. That is, we can say all of the following: the ‘first friend’ is the good; the ‘first friend’ is happiness; and the ‘first friend’ is the wisdom that brings happiness and without which there is no happiness. And this will help us with another problem that we might have foreseen earlier: how exactly can hunger, thirst, sexual desire and so on be desires for *the real good*? That, of course, is what they will have to be, if *all* desire is for the good, and if nothing is truly a ‘friend’, or good, apart from the first, true, ‘friend’ or good. On the scheme Socrates offers us, the objects of hunger and thirst will be desired for the sake of something else, i.e. benefit, or (ultimately) happiness; but according to a combination of 210A–D with 221A–B, benefit will only be got from them – they will only turn out well – if we have knowledge about how to manage them. A happy life, then, is a knowledgeable one.

To spell this out more explicitly: a life will be happy just insofar as it is knowledgeable, with ‘true’ goodness and loveableness attaching to nothing except knowledge and its application. Knowledge, then, *is* happiness, not because knowledge is the necessary and sufficient condition of happiness, or gives access to other desirable things, but because being knowledgeable is the only way of being happy. If what we choose is not happiness but the way to happiness – you can only choose to act, not to be in a certain state – and that way to happiness – that action – is the employing of wisdom, then in this case we have the sort of identity we need: choosing wisdom is

¹³⁶ We should notice in passing that *Euthydemus* 278–82 sets up exactly the same dilemma (wisdom as the only thing good in itself, yet with whatever is good being good as a means to happiness), again with no signs of discomfort on Socrates’ part. We discuss this point further below, in Chapter 11, §II.

¹³⁷ So *passim* in the *Lysis*: Socrates to Lysis, Socrates to Menexenus, Socrates to Lysis and Menexenus.

choosing the way to happiness. That is not to say that ordinary things like money, even quails and cocks, won't be around; just that they'll be there, if they are, in any happy and successful life, 'for the sake of the good, what is 'truly' *philon*, 'loved' ('friend'), as always determined by wisdom.¹³⁸ (Money will sometimes be part of a happy life, sometimes not.) But what is truly *philon* will be that life.

Yet still: isn't there a problem about all this? Doesn't it leave *other people*, too, as merely 'friends' for the sake of something else – and so not real 'friends' (i.e. really loved, on Socrates' account) at all? That does not, surely, look like the right outcome, even if it is in fact suggested by some aspects of Socrates' account (see above, *passim*):¹³⁹ not least because Socrates himself behaves as if in fact he too, like everyone else, believes that it is possible for us genuinely to love others: so, probably, at 222A6–7,¹⁴⁰ and perhaps in the final sentence of the whole dialogue, where he suggests that he counts himself and the boys as friends ('For these people here will say as they leave that we think that we're friends of one another – for I count myself too as one of you . . .', 223B5–7). If he were proposing to deny even the possibility of our loving others, his general position would look pretty hard to defend (could there really be no such thing e.g. as friendship 'in the ordinary sense'?); just as it would look hard to defend if he ultimately denied that fathers, parents, love their children.

But it appears, fortunately, as if we may be saved from having to defend any such claims on Socrates' behalf. Loving other people – whether sons, or those we in English call our 'friends', or anyone else – will after all figure in his account. His claim is that once we see what the true object of love is, i.e. the 'first friend', what is truly good and beneficial, that will change what we say about other things that we claim to love – which now turn out to be, not 'friends', but 'for the sake of the friend'. So we will still have our close relationships with people, and desire what is good for them, but we'll understand them quite differently, i.e. as being for the sake of something else; that is, on condition that they are, or loving them is, genuinely for

¹³⁸ One fundamental aspect of the position outlined, it will be noticed, is that the only thing that will always be present to the good life is wisdom or knowledge (and happiness). This is what ultimately makes sense of Socrates' radical position that the 'first friend' is the only thing that is a friend, or a good at all. Friends of the common-or-garden sort, money, power, quails – none comes into the picture except sometimes, namely, on those occasions where they do form part of such a life (i.e. a good one).

¹³⁹ That is, insofar as that account supposes that the loved object must always somehow bring 'benefit' to the one loving; a point whose possible implications e.g. for father/son relationships seemed to us to be brought out in the passage on the 'first friend'.

¹⁴⁰ On the complexities of this particular sentence of Socrates', see Chapter 6 below.

the sake of that something else (genuinely contribute or lead to it).¹⁴¹ In short, the claim is that our friends will turn out to be not quite what we thought they were. But that will not be any reason for abandoning them or behaving any differently towards them from the way we do now; the only reason for doing either of these things would be that it was wiser (if so it turned out to be).

We propose to leave to Part II the crucial question whether the whole philosophical position outlined above will stand up to close scrutiny. The question is all the more important, of course, because the sort of position that has emerged looks in many respects inherently counter-intuitive, or to put it less politely, inherently counter to common sense – though where Socrates, or at least Plato's Socrates, are involved, that will be absolutely no objection at all; as the various parts of the argument of the *Lysis* repeatedly demonstrate, this Socrates is never happier than when appearing to go out on a limb.¹⁴² For now, our claim is only that either what we have described, or some version of it, is suggested – no more than that – by the argument of the *Lysis* as we have read it, and as (we propose) it invites us to read it, up to the point in the dialogue we have so far reached (i.e. 221c).¹⁴³ (Above all, perhaps, the position outlined enables us to make sense of that talk about 'so-called friendships', and the way these lead to what is 'really a friend': '... and what is really a friend seems likely to be that very thing to which these so-called "friendships" finally lead', 220B1–3.) In short, the 'first friend' is *both* the good/happiness *and* knowledge/wisdom. And in truth, if it had turned out merely to be the good, and happiness, that might have been a disappointing result: a decent one, and informative in many ways, yet too broad, leaving open too many possibilities. The addition of *wisdom*, even without much by way of detailed specification of what wisdom would consist in,¹⁴⁴ gives us that crucial indication of the need to begin *sorting priorities*; a task that is begun by Socrates himself, with the distinction between the 'first friend' and other so-called 'friends'. But, as his argument

¹⁴¹ We'll have money, power, horses, or quails, too, on the same condition; the difference is that they seem less reliably capable, i.e. than loving other people, of fulfilling it – perhaps sometimes being present, sometimes not: cf. text to n. 138 above.

¹⁴² It should also be added that the position sketched will not look quite so strange to anyone familiar with, say, ancient Cynicism, or – perhaps especially – Stoicism (and both schools in fact claimed intellectual descent from Socrates). But this is not the place to discuss the later history of Socratic/Platonic ideas.

¹⁴³ And indeed to 222c – at which point there will begin a kind of reversal, or *peripeteia*, in the argument (see Chapter 7 below).

¹⁴⁴ Except, that is, that it will be that knowledge required for a happy and successful life, (which is a matter of being) in possession of what is good; plus a few hints about what might in all or at any rate virtually all cases make a major contribution towards that, 'lead to' that (family, friends . . .).

clearly shows, he thinks that that distinction by itself is enough to threaten our existing scales of values.

E. 221C5–D6: the true cause of philia?

After this long discussion of the identity of the ‘first friend’, however, it is well to remind ourselves that *Socrates’ own concerns appear to be rather different, and much more particular, insofar as he is still preoccupied with achieving a defensible formulation in relation to ‘friendship’, *philia*, and ‘the friend’, *to philon*.* Now, in 221C5–D6, he draws some of the threads together: *philia* doesn’t exist because of the bad; it’s *desire*¹⁴⁵ that’s the cause (i.e. the because of what: cf. 217A6, etc.), as the last section has shown – for we would still desire even if nothing bad existed, and something would cause us to desire, for the sake of something¹⁴⁶ (217D7–8, etc.):

‘Well then, hasn’t it been agreed by us that the friend (*to philon*) loves something, and because of something; and didn’t we think, at *that* point (*tote ge*), that it was because of the bad that the neither good nor bad loved the good?’

‘True.’

221D1 ‘But now, it seems, another sort of cause of loving and being loved is appearing.’¹⁴⁷

‘It does seem so.’

‘So is it in fact (*tōi onti*) the case, as we were saying just now, that desire is cause of friendship,¹⁴⁸ and that what desires is friend to that thing it desires and at such time that it desires it, and that what **221D5** we were previously saying a friend (*philon*) was, was some kind of nonsense, like a poem that’s been badly put together [or ‘something that’s been put together like a bad poem’; or ‘like a long and confused poem’; or ‘something put together like a long poem’; or ‘like a poem that’s been put together in an old-fashioned way’]?’¹⁴⁹

‘Quite likely (*kinduneuei*).’ (221C5–D6)

¹⁴⁵ Sc. desire for the good. This supplement is surely guaranteed by 221C7, where the good reappears as object of *philein*. However the point is too important to leave to a mere footnote; see our further argument for it in the main text below.

¹⁴⁶ The previous agreement that ‘friendship’ always involves both a ‘because’ and a ‘for the sake of’ (218D) has, after all, nowhere been withdrawn; rather that analysis has been developed, respectively in the sections discussed in §D, with the present §E, and §C.

¹⁴⁷ ‘Of loving and being loved’: given the run of the argument, this of course has absolutely nothing to do with reciprocity in the sense of reciprocal *loving*; what Socrates is looking for is just the cause of one thing’s (one person’s) being a *philos/on* subject and another’s being the (*philon*) object of the first’s *philein*.

¹⁴⁸ ‘As we were saying just now’, in the way explained in the following few words: that – sc. with the alleged cause of ‘friendship’, the bad, removed – desire (sc. for the real good) is the only remaining suspect. There is ‘friendship’ only if and when the subject desires; badness is not the cause.

¹⁴⁹ The text here is surely corrupt. The manuscript tradition has what we have given as the third of the bracketed alternatives (*hōsper poiēma makron sunkeimēnon*): the sense it offers is lame in the

What is being called ‘some kind of nonsense’ is, presumably, the formulation (repeated in c6–7: ‘that it was because of the bad that the neither good nor bad loved the good’) that includes the element ‘because of the bad’. Socrates could hardly have indicated more clearly that it is just *this* element that needs to be got rid of, leaving the other elements undisturbed – or rather, with ‘because of desire’ substituted for ‘because of the bad’. It was incontrovertibly the purpose of the previous section of the argument to show that the bad isn’t the cause; and in the course of showing that, it also happened to throw up the real cause: desire. One of the features of the whole of this last part of the *Lysis* (from 217A) is that what it does want to spell out, it spells out clearly and carefully; and it does so nowhere more clearly and carefully than here.

But there is something, nonetheless, that looks bizarre about Socrates’ choice of substitution for ‘because of the bad’ – as if everything would be in order if we *just* substituted ‘desire’ for ‘the bad’. The choice of ‘desire’ is all the more bizarre-looking for the fact that the desires last mentioned in the context are things like thirst, hunger and the like. Surely there should be some more perspicuous way to bring out what contrast is intended between ‘because of the bad’ and ‘because of desire’? We suggest – and the suggestion is plainly supported by the text¹⁵⁰ – that the desire in question can only be desire for the *good*. (So, in fact, even in 220E6–221B3: if we act in response to thirst or hunger it will be acting in order to be benefited rather than harmed – that is, the desire in question is not desire for food, say, but desire for the good in this situation which happens to include eating.) On this supposition, the substance of the contrast between ‘because of the bad’ and ‘because of desire’ is that position we attributed a little earlier¹⁵¹ to the Socrates of the *Lysis*; that it is not *bad* that is a real thing, a ‘positive entity’,

extreme, since *length* (*makron*) is hardly the most outstanding failing of the rejected story about the role of the bad in *philia*. The text we have adopted, without much conviction, replaces *makron* with *kakōs*, ‘badly’: a poem that was *badly* put together would be to the point, especially since it would be something that would have the bad *as its cause* (i.e. someone, a poet, lacking in expertise; but how does *poetry* come into it?). The first bracketed alternative would have the same sense; the second, with *sunkechumenon* for *sunkeimenon* (suggested in conversation by Sarah Broadie), looks as if it ought to be somewhere in the running; while the fourth, which replaces *makron* with *Kronikos* (Robinson, varying a suggestion by Madvig), for all its palaeological ingenuity has the weakness that a reference to an *old-fashioned* poem seems to have no relevance at all (the best that can be said for *Kronikos* appears to be that the corresponding adjective *kronikos* has figured earlier in the *Lysis*, i.e. at 205c6, and in a context which also refers to poems). Not much hangs on what one does choose to read, but it would be good to know what Plato actually wrote, as – amazingly, after two and a half millennia – we have reason to think we do practically everywhere else.

¹⁵⁰ See n. 145 above. ¹⁵¹ See §D above.

in the world (good being absence of bad), but *good* (bad being absence of good).¹⁵²

All of this, or much of it, we are left to work out for ourselves. And this is quite characteristic of the *Lysis* as a whole. An essential part of what is going on is that Socrates is teaching Lysis and Menexenus what proper and systematic inquiry is like; the result, as we have noticed before, is what may seem a rather *schematic* approach, which relegates substantive issues – apparently – to the margins. Different interlocutors might perhaps, like us, have wanted to ask Socrates about that odd-looking beast, the ‘first friend’, and the associated downgrading of other alleged kinds of *philia* to the status of ‘so-called’ *philai* – to which, no doubt, Socrates would have replied that to ask that question was to miss the main point, which is about the *structure* of desiring: a certain kind of subject, a certain kind of relation, a certain – if unexpected – kind of object. However he can eat his cake and still have it too, as can the author, Plato, by means of hint and implication; we are still being told at least something about the nature of the beast, if we read carefully enough. And if there is, ever, any sense of a let-down, that too might be part of the lesson for a *Lysis* or a *Menexenus*. Anti-climax, disappointment, getting nowhere very much: these are things that any budding philosopher will need to be taught to allow for, and indeed the two boys have had a fair share of all of them before in the *Lysis* itself.

But here we must draw a line; this is an apology, a defence, too far. Anyone who feels inclined to suppose that the conclusion of 221D3 is a mouse (*desire* as the cause of ‘friendship’: even, perhaps, when identified as desire *for the good*), when the argument led us to expect an elephant, is not grasping what we have previously labelled the *cumulative* nature of Socrates’ argument in the dialogue. Lack of appreciation of this aspect of the *Lysis* is probably the second most important reason why modern readers have tended to hold it in such low esteem (the first, and most important, reason still being that it appears to most readers to get interpersonal love wrong, without offering us anything else that is worth much: it goes without saying that we – Penner and Rowe – strongly disagree on both counts). What is rejected, and treated as ‘some kind of nonsense’, at 221D5, is *just* the element ‘because of the bad’: reasons have been given for jettisoning that, and absolutely nothing has been said to cause us to jettison anything else. So everything else still stands: it’s the neither good nor bad

¹⁵² This, again, will be of a piece with the claim that there are no bad people: see n. 61 above. (For Socrates here there are no *evil* people: just the ignorant. And, since even the ignorant desire their own good, they also *will* desire at least such changes of belief as will impact upon their pursuit of their desires.)

that ‘loves’ or ‘is friend of’ the good, because of its desire (for the good), and the good will be that for the sake of which we go for other things while not itself being for the sake of anything (else). This formulation, as we have seen, and as it has been developed, gives us an account of desire which, far from resembling a mouse, will be far too strong for many tastes – including Lysis’ and Menexenus’, as it will ultimately turn out (see Chapter 7 below).

And in fact, in the context of this account, just getting clear about the role of the bad in ‘friendship’, and rejecting it as cause, is absolutely central for Socrates’ purposes. We have given one reason for saying this (to do with the view that it is *good* that is primitive); here is another. The ordinary view will treat the question about the nature, origin and object(s) of ‘friendship’ or desire as a perfectly simple one: we have certain needs and wants, and our desires will be just for whatever will fill those needs and wants: we need food and drink, we feel hungry and thirsty, we go for food and drink; we want to be rich and powerful, so we go for money and power; and so on. On this sort of analysis, what we desire, and go for,¹⁵³ will be determined by a combination of our perceived needs/wants: this will be what we treat as good, and – to put it in terms of the argument of the *Lysis* – ‘friend’, *philon*. Then, in these same terms, our not having these ‘goods’ will be a bad thing; and then there might be a temptation to say that we go for them *because* we don’t have them. But this would obviously be a mistake, if they are not in fact goods. What we desire is what *is* (really) good; that is what drives us. The whole of the other position will be swept away¹⁵⁴ by Socrates’ rejection of the bad as cause of *philia*. The real cause is our desire – we are, ineluctably, desiring beings (cf. Chapter 10 below, §3); and all our desire, and so our *philia*, our ‘friendship’, is for what is truly *philon*, truly loved (whatever that may be: whatever wisdom would determine it to be), because truly beneficial.¹⁵⁵ This is the point to which we return in the next section of the dialogue.

¹⁵³ Desires that don’t affect our actions are scarcely of any interest here; it’s ‘executive’ desires that clearly matter for the purposes of the argument, not what we merely dream about.

¹⁵⁴ It was, of course, already undermined by the ‘Menexenus discussion’ (212A–213C), q.v.

¹⁵⁵ Thus there is no way at all in which the ‘for the sake of which’ is determined by the ‘because of what’ (see above, text to n. 105).

CHAPTER 6

221D6–222B2: the main argument reaches its conclusion

In this, the final part of the main argument, Socrates draws some threads together before reaching a conclusion (though in the immediate sequel, 222B3–E7, he will make the conclusion *seem* to be in doubt): that ‘[i]t’s necessary . . . for the genuine lover, one who’s not pretended, to be loved by his darling’ (222A6–7). Quite what this amounts to, and how it relates to the argument so far, may be as opaque, at first reading, as it evidently is to Menexenus, and to Lysis. But on our analysis, it is a natural outcome of the argument of the *Lysis* up to the present point.

The short passage in question may for convenience be divided up into two movements, though the division is more than usually artificial.¹ The passage has some markedly strange features, which are accounted for by a partial change of register, from full seriousness to a certain mixture of the serious and the playful – largely caused by the fact that Socrates will simultaneously (a) reach *his* conclusion, (b) appear to give Hippothales what *he* wants, and (c) leave Lysis and Menexenus in differing degrees of uncertainty as to what, precisely, they have agreed to, even while they have plainly come some of the way with him.

(a) 221D6–E5: IS THE OBJECT OF PHILIA WHAT BELONGS (TO OIKEION)?

‘But,’² I said, ‘what desires, desires whatever it’s 221E1 lacking. Isn’t that so?’
‘Yes.’

¹ The passage as a whole is in fact absolutely continuous with what has preceded: 221D2–6, the last sentence before we have made our cut, not only rounds off the previous part of the argument, i.e. by announcing the final rejection of the proposal that the presence of the bad was the cause of *philia*, but contains a premiss of the next part (see [following note](#)). Nevertheless, given how much of the conversation has been framed by that proposal – ‘because of the bad’ was introduced as far back as 217A – there is some justification for making (and taking) a break at 221D6, so also giving recognition to the fact that 221D6–222B2 contains the main conclusion of the argument of the *Lysis*.

² Denniston (1959: 412) treats *alla mentoi . . . ge* here as introducing a minor premiss, and this seems right: what desires is *philon* to what it desires, D2–4; what desires, desires what it lacks – the move

'And what is lacking, in that case (*ara*), is friend of whatever it's lacking?'

'It seems so to me.'

'And what becomes lacking is whatever has something taken away from it.'

'Of course.'

'It's what belongs to us (*to oikeion*), then, that's actually (*tunchanei ousa*) the object of passion (*erōs*) and friendship (*philia*) and desire (*epithumia*), as it appears,
221E5 Menexenus and Lysis.'

The two of them assented. (221D6–E5)

'But . . . what desires, desires whatever it's lacking' (221D6–E1): in other words, we desire everything we lack. 'Lack' here has to be understood in terms of *needing*, not simply in terms of not having. If we say 'humans lack feathers', that is irrelevant to Socrates' point; for we have no *need* of feathers. In the context of Socrates' overall argument here in the *Lysis*, the claim at issue (that everything we lack, we desire) has a more particular application, namely that everything we *genuinely* lack, we desire; for the one thing we lack, according to what Socrates has argued, is what is good and beneficial, and all desire is for the good. No desiring subject *is* good (i.e. is wise), and no desiring subject has what is good (whether we identify what is good with happiness or with wisdom): whoever desires is not good, but only neither-good-nor-bad, and if the subject already is good or has what is good, then it no longer desires.⁴ Once more the old lesson applies, that Socrates' argument at any point is likely to presuppose gains made earlier.

being made here in D6–8; so what is lacking is *philon* of what it lacks, E1–2 (here in 221 both '*philon of*' and '*philon to*' are used of subject in relation to object).

³ Rowe 2000 rather less precisely translated this premiss as 'whatever has something taken away from it is lacking' (he also took it as obviously false, which now seems to him clearly wrong: see below). Another possible translation is '. . . a thing becomes/is [gignetai: see below] lacking of whatever it is deprived of'. But this means treating the *ti* in the subordinate clause as the subject of the whole sentence, which – *pace* Stephanus and others – looks an unnecessarily difficult way of taking things, if an alternative is available; that our translation of the sentence means taking the genitive of the relative pronoun differently from the way it must be taken in Socrates' previous two contributions seems to us no objection, and *aphairein* with genitive of the thing/person being deprived of something is perfectly regular. (The manuscripts have *tis* here in E2 for *ti*, but we take this to be a simple error based on a copyist's misunderstanding.)

But why the *gignetai*, 'becomes' ('what becomes lacking . . .')? This appears at first sight to exclude cases where what is lacking has *always* lacked – when in fact, on Socrates' account, this is the only sort of case that actually obtains (what is lacked is the good, and no human being ever yet possessed the good). We suggest, however, that the point is merely to establish the connection between taking away and lacking: a thing is lacking if and only if something is taken away from it/it is deprived of something (on what to do with Socrates' talk of 'taking away', see further below). One could try, as we did try, translating *gignetai* as 'turns out to be', but this seems no better than a fudge. (We are grateful to George Rudebusch and to Louis-André Dorion for discussions of some of the issues here.)

⁴ See 217E–218B ('the good don't philosophize', etc.), and Chapter 5, §2(A) above. On the apparent oddity of the idea, see n. 132 to Chapter 5.

Next: to lack something is to be deprived of something, have something taken away from one (*aphaireisthai ti*), E2–3; but (what one is deprived of is what belongs to one; so) passion, *erōs*, ‘friendship’, and desire are of what belongs to one (what is *oikeion*), E3–5. A retort to this might be that only what people already have can be taken away from them; and then, since the present case involves an object/objects that are specifically not possessed at any point (because *always* lacked), it will be tempting to accuse Socrates of straightforward equivocation, i.e. of moving from the ordinary kind of belonging to another and less ordinary one (the ‘naturally’ belonging, which will be explicitly introduced at E6, and the ‘taking away’ of what ‘naturally’ belongs). Such a retort, however, would be misplaced: there is hardly anything *recherché* about the idea that things can belong to someone, and be taken away from him, without their ever actually having been in his possession (so with an inheritance; physical faculties; anything we should have, for whatever reason, but don’t in fact possess). One might still have a sense of unease, insofar as that isn’t the obvious sort of belonging and taking away, the sort one would first think of. But that would again be – by now, the point surely makes itself – to forget that Socrates is working within a specific context; and the specific context is by itself more than sufficient to exclude the ‘obvious’ variety of belonging and taking away.⁵ After all, what Socrates and the boys are seeking is what is universally true of ‘the friend’, and no one would claim that we are always and only ‘friends of’, desire, what we once possessed. While there is nothing in the least obvious about saying that the good – long since, of course, identified as the object of *philia*, ‘friendship’, and of desire, *epithumia*⁶ – is what ‘belongs to’ us, nevertheless it must be so if to be lacking is a matter of being deprived (accepted by Menexenus at E3), and we are lacking, *endeis*, of the good. Again, one *might* claim to be lacking, and to be deprived of, all sorts of things. But Socrates can legitimately ignore any such things that his argument has ruled out as possible objects of desire, i.e. because they are not good. Menexenus

⁵ Here, and in the last paragraph, it seems important to us that Socrates’ proposals both be defensible at the level of Socrates’ argument and at the same time appear to work at a lower (more ‘common-sense’?) level, just in order to account for Menexenus’ positive responses to those proposals; as we shall shortly be reminded (at 222A4, B1, then C7–D1: see below), Menexenus is some way from getting Socrates’ precise drift. Or, if Socrates’ proposals in fact appear *indefensible* outside the context of his argument, to that extent Plato has failed to preserve the dramatic plausibility that he has seemed to achieve elsewhere. What is quite incontrovertible is that it has not so far been Plato’s aim to have Menexenus – still less Lysis – merely nodding thoughtless agreement, and that in any case it is hard to see what such a strategy would contribute to his overall purposes (except merely getting him through to the end?).

⁶ ‘Friendship’ and desire (and ‘passion’, *erōs*) are, of course, in the present context, being treated together – as E3–4 confirms.

and Lysis, then (we claim), are perfectly correct in accepting Socrates' two proposals at E2–5 ('what [is] lacking is whatever has something taken away from it'; 'it's what belongs to us . . . that's actually the object of passion', etc.) – whether or not they see everything that lies behind these proposals, which, to judge from the way things will shortly go, they probably do not.⁷

Much more important to notice, however, is the fact that we have now come full circle, by an independent route, to the conception of what is good for, benefits, us as *what belongs to us, to oikeion* (or what is 'ours', *hēmeteron*):⁸ see 210A–C, where this conception of the good first appeared, and Chapter 5, §2(c + d)(iii) above. The role of knowledge, already central in 210A–C, has by 221 become even more crucial; for just how are we to determine what is *truly* good? And now this object of our desire (the good) is about to become – our last paragraph anticipated the point – what *naturally* belongs to us, is part of our natures (E6, 222A5).

(b) 221E5–222B2: . . . AND SO THE GENUINE LOVER MUST
BE LOVED BY HIS DARLING (?)

This idea of what naturally belongs to us is what Socrates mainly uses to reach his conclusion about the loveability of the genuine lover in 222A6–7.⁹ To see what is going on in the stretch of argument that will get us to that conclusion, we need to realize that Socrates is here (finally!) applying earlier conclusions to interpersonal relationships. To the case, first, of two *persons* said to be 'friends' of each other (221E5–6, 221E7–222A3), and then of one *person* said to be a 'lover' of another (221E7–222A1), he applies his conclusions about *oikeiotēs* and about '*x* loves *y*', where *y* is *not* a person but the one true or real friend – the good. It might occur to one, thinking about how to apply these conclusions to two 'friends' or to a 'lover' and his darling, that if the right sort of attention were paid to the role of the 'first friend' in the relations between the 'friends' and between the 'lover' and his darling, we might find ourselves in the position of speaking about these relationships not merely as what we *call* 'friendship' or what we *call* 'being a lover', but in terms of some cases of genuine friendship and genuine

⁷ See n. 5 above.

⁸ The equivalence of *hēmeteron*, 'ours', and *oikeion*, 'belonging'/'related to', may now surely be taken as read.

⁹ The key to understanding this new section will be, again, to take Socrates as being serious about what he is saying – while *also* allowing for elements of play (see above) in his, and of course Plato's, handling of Lysis and Menexenus – and, finally, of Hippothales.

being in love – in which the other friend, the lover, and his darling all show up somewhere in the account, even though it remains the case that the object loved is the ‘first friend’. This is the sort of explanation we will attempt. The passage begins immediately with personal ‘friendship’ and the *oikeion*:

‘The two of you, in that case (*ara*), if you’re friends to each other, in some way (*pēi*) naturally belong [are *phusei oikeioi*] the one to the other.’

‘No doubt about it,’ they said together.

‘And if, then (*kai ei ara*),¹⁰ any one person desires any other,¹¹ I said, 222A1 ‘you boys (*paides*), or feels passion (*eran*) for him, he wouldn’t ever desire, or feel passion, or love (*philein*), if he didn’t actually in some way¹² belong [were not *oikeios*] to the one he is feeling passion for, either in relation to the soul or in relation to some characteristic of the soul, or ways (*tropoi*) or form (*eidos*).¹³

‘Absolutely so,’ said Menexenus; but Lysis said nothing.

‘Very well. 222A5 What naturally belongs to us (*to . . . phusei oikeion*), then¹⁴ – it’s become evident to us that it’s necessary for us to love it.’¹⁵

‘It seems so,’ he [Menexenus?] said.

¹⁰ The sequence *kai ei ara* is quite difficult to interpret (even with Denniston’s help), but it looks as if what Socrates is doing here (221E7–222A3) is to introduce some more general version of his preceding contribution, i.e. in 221D6–E5.

¹¹ For this use of *heteros heteron*, see 212B4 (in the Menexenus discussion): ‘(Do both, then, become friends of each other, if) just *one of them loves the other*?’

¹² This is *pēi* again, as in 221E6; see below for the importance of the qualification.

¹³ The Greek word *eidos* here is ambiguous as between (1) *physical* ‘form’, or beauty, and (2) ‘type’, i.e. of *soul* (see below); ‘form’ is our not very successful attempt to reproduce the ambiguity in English.

We draw attention to the two ‘if clauses – ‘if you are friends’ in 222E5–6, and ‘if any one person desires another’ in E7. Is it Socrates’ intention that we reject these antecedents, since the ‘first friend’ is not a person, and the one true friend (or thing desired) can only be the ‘first friend’? This would certainly place restrictions on Socrates’ ability to say anything about how we are to understand what we think of as mutual friendships and the upcoming contrast between the genuine and the pretended lovers (222A6–7). To anticipate a little, the picture that we, Penner and Rowe, want to present of this section of the dialogue is that Socrates wishes us to see these topics as under discussion in the following slightly relaxed framework (symbolized by the word *pēi*, ‘in some way’, ‘somehow’, at 221E6, 222A2 – though the same word simultaneously keeps the idea that there is only one *true friend*). In this more relaxed framework, there will be mutual friendships, ones that involve the two friends’ *each loving wisdom and seeing each other’s company and conversation as their own best means to that wisdom*; and there will be genuine as opposed to pretended lovers, the genuine ones being those who *seek to have their darlings come to see the need for wisdom*. (In Chapter 7, however, it will turn out that certain dangers lurk for the boys in their being allowed this more relaxed treatment of *philia*.)

¹⁴ For a comparable case of *eien* followed by *men dē* see *Phaedo* 105E: ‘Very well: are we then to say that this much has been demonstrated?’, sc. the conclusion just arrived at, that the soul is something *athanatos*, ‘deathless’ or ‘immortal’. (The ‘then’, *dē*, is only lightly inferential.)

¹⁵ Because of its position, the *hēmin*, ‘to us’ could conceivably go just with the ‘necessary’ (‘necessary for us’), instead of with both ‘necessary’ and ‘it’s become evident’ (as we have taken it); but it hardly matters, since what has ‘become evident’ is in any case obviously something that is supposed to be true of everyone (us all).

'It's necessary, in that case (*ara*), for the genuine lover, one who's not pretended, to be loved (*phileisthai*) by his darling (*paidika*).'

222B1 At that (*oun*) Lysis and Menexenus barely somehow nodded assent, but there was no mistaking Hippothales' pleasure, which made him go all sorts of colours. (221E5–222B2)

The first proposal Socrates puts to Lysis and Menexenus has more to it than may appear at first sight, and probably more than the two boys understand. If it is true that all *philia* (and *erōs*, and *epithumia*) are for what belongs (is *oikeion*) to us (221E3–4), then – Socrates says – it must also be true, if the two boys love (*philein*) each other, that each somehow 'belongs to' the other (E5–6). The addition of the 'naturally' ('you . . . in some way *naturally* belong the one to the other') maintains the connection between desiring, lacking and being deprived of something (221E1–3): what we desire is something that we don't have, but is as it were part of us, and the having of which would complete our nature (so that we would become good instead of merely neither good nor bad). But of course neither of the boys actually *is*, to the other, that something which is lacking. (By the entire preceding argument, what that something is which is lacking remains the 'first friend'.) Hence Socrates' carefully placed 'somehow' (*pēi*). They only *somehow* (naturally) belong to each other – Socrates is not, we assume, interested in denying that they are (somehow) friends, but they are not 'what belongs', *to oikeion, simpliciter*.

Lysis and Menexenus emphatically concur (E6–7) : 'no doubt about it': *komidei*. But it seems hardly likely that they would be responding so emphatically if they were seeing the proposal we have ourselves just attributed to Socrates; and in any case they would surely need more help to get them that far. A more reasonable explanation of their reaction would be that they are agreeing at least primarily to the suggestion that they are mutually *oikeioi* – taking that to be saying that they have much in common, which was of course where their whole encounter with Socrates started back in 207B–C ('which of you is older, nobler, etc.?').¹⁶ They of course take it for granted that they really are friends, and that – even if Socrates does not press the point – is actually one assumption that Socrates' argument has tended to make less secure. So to that extent they cannot in any case be singing quite from the same hymn-sheet as he is.

So – to return to that hymn-sheet of Socrates' – Lysis and Menexenus '*in some way* naturally belong the one to the other'. About how they

¹⁶ So they will to that extent have been fooled by their *likeness*, which the argument has shown not to be a basis for *philia* (213D–215C). See further Chapter 7 below.

belong together (if they are friends),¹⁷ we learn a little from what Socrates next offers: ‘And if, then, any one person desires any other . . . or feels passion for him, he wouldn’t ever desire, or feel passion, or love, if he didn’t actually in some way belong to the one he is feeling passion for, either in relation to the soul or in relation to some characteristic of the soul, or ways or form’ (221E7–222A1). Quite what this specification amounts to will take some little discussion to establish, but we may say with some certainty that it is meant to apply, retrospectively, to the case of Menexenus’ and Lysis’ friendship (because Socrates is stating a general rule). So they ‘belong to’ each other ‘either in relation to the soul . . .’ – but still only ‘in some way’; that qualification survives into the general formulation in 221E7–222A1, alongside the specification of the different respects in which they might belong to each other (so: might belong *in some way*). Menexenus, Lysis, *any* immediate object of love, passion or desire: they will only be *oikeios pēi*, only ‘belong in some way’ to the one loving. That, we claim, is just because they are not the good ultimately sought; at best they contribute, ‘in some way’, towards it. What this passage does is to draw a connection between the central account of love in terms of desire for the good and more conventional cases – or at any rate some more conventional cases – of ‘friendship’ and of ‘being in love’. (So now, we may notice, we will by implication have a kind of solution to the puzzle raised in the ‘Menexenus discussion’: in its most general form, ‘how one person becomes friend of another’, 212A5–6 – a puzzle which was itself introduced by a reference to the friendship between the two boys. See Chapter 3 above.)

We turn now specifically to 221E7–222A3; and it at once appears to contain a surprising turn. Given simply that the good is *oikeion* to the person who loves, what we should expect Socrates to say, if he is announcing a general rule, is that if anyone desires, etc., anyone else, then the one desired, etc. must be *oikeion* to the one desiring. But this is not what we find. Indeed, what Socrates turns out to be interested in now is the suggestion just made, about two friends being *in some way oikeioi* to each other – an altogether different matter. And it is this different – though, one hopes, closely related – use of *oikeiotēs* that must be involved when Socrates tells us, in his new contribution, that *the one desiring will be in some way oikeios to the one desired*. To cite 221E7–222A3 again:

¹⁷ It seems important to go on reminding ourselves of this conditional clause: again, not because Socrates will want to *deny* that they are friends, but just because he has carefully constructed for us an account of what the *true* friend is. See further below.

'And if, then, any one person desires any other,' I said, 'you boys, or feels passion for him, he wouldn't ever desire, or feel passion, or love, if he didn't actually in some way belong to the object of his passion, either in relation to the soul or in relation to some characteristic of the soul, or ways or form.'

How is it, we are bound to ask, that we have moved from *oikeiotēs*, 'belonging', as a property of the object of love, as it was in E2–5, and then – apparently – again in E5–6, as following on from E2–5, to *oikeiotēs* as a property of the *subject*? The shift is clearly crucial for reaching the conclusion in 222A6–7 (about the necessity for the genuine lover to be loved by the beloved); but can Socrates justify it?

We think he can, provided that we see that he is now talking not just about cases of *x* loving *y*, where *y* – by the preceding argument, stretching from at least 216C – can only be the good, but about cases where one person *A* is called a 'friend to' another person *B*, or *A* is a person said to be 'in love with' another person *B*. (The former sort of case will certainly be allowed in certain contexts at the very end of the dialogue: see 223B5–8.) Here is where 222A2–3 makes a difference: '[a lover, etc.] wouldn't ever desire, or feel passion, or love, if he didn't actually in some way belong to the object of his passion, *either in relation to the soul or in relation to some characteristic of the soul, or ways or form*'. There is plainly nothing in the immediately preceding argument (i.e. since 221D6) that allows Socrates to add this qualification. So what licenses the addition? We suggest that what allows it is rather the earlier, and cumulative, connection of the – true – object of love with *wisdom or knowledge*. If person *A* is said to love person *B*, *B* will be somehow, in some way, *oikeios* to *A*. Why? Because, if genuine love is somehow involved in this relation, then *B* must have some connection with *A*'s good. Then, if *A*'s good is, or depends on, wisdom, *B* must have some role in *A*'s acquisition of wisdom. But in that case it must be in virtue of *B*'s soul, or some feature of his soul, that *B* is *oikeios* to *A*. (As to how *B*'s *body* will be relevant to *A*'s becoming wise, absent some special, and undisclosed, theory of learning, e.g. through physical contact with beauty, that will surely be rather less clear.) And at the same time, if *A*'s interest in *B* is based on a *concern for wisdom*, *A* will then be *oikeios* (somehow, in some way) to *B*. So, if the object of love is *oikeios* to the one loving, the one loving will also be *oikeios* to the object of his love.

This is what we think lies behind Socrates' proposal here in 221E7–222A3. In spelling it out in this way, we are relying – as we have said – on what has emerged about Socrates' understanding of what it is that we truly love, in terms of wisdom/knowledge. As one looks back over the dialogue as a whole,

this concern with wisdom turned up as early as that initial conversation of Socrates' with Lysis (if not before): everyone would become Lysis' 'friend', Socrates concluded there, and everyone his *oikeios*, on condition that he become wise. It will probably help the reader if we reproduce the key passage in full once again:

'This is how it is, then,' I said, 'my friend Lysis: with respect to the things about which we become good thinkers, everyone will hand them over to us, whether Greeks or non-Greeks, men or women, and we shall do in these cases whatever we wish, and no one will deliberately stand in our way, but we shall be at the same time free ourselves, in the cases in question, and controllers of others, and these will be *our* things (*hēmetera*), because we shall benefit from them; with respect to the things about which we do not acquire intelligence, on the other hand, neither will anyone hand it over to us to do in relation to *them* what appears to us to be the thing to do, but everyone will stand in our way to whatever extent they can, not only people not belonging to us (*allotrioi*), but our father and our mother, and anything else that may belong more closely [be *oikeiotoron*] to us than these, and we ourselves in such cases shall be subject to others, and the things in question will not belong to us [will be *allotria*], because we shall derive no benefit from them. Do you agree that this is how it is?'

'I agree.'

'Will we then be objects of love to anyone, and will anyone love us, in those things, whatever they are, in which we are of no benefit?'

'Certainly not.'

'If that's so, then neither does your father love you; nor does any other person love anyone else, to whatever extent that someone else is useless.'

'It doesn't appear so,' he said.

'In that case, my boy, if you become wise, everyone will be friends to you and everyone will belong to you [will be *oikeioi* to you], for you will be useful and good, but if you don't, neither anyone else nor your father will be friend to you, nor your mother nor those belonging to you (*hoi oikeioi*) . . .' (210A9–D4)

Just as, by identifying the object of desire with the *oikeion* in 221D6–E5, Socrates came back round to that earlier connection between what is 'ours' and what benefits us (see §(a) above, and Chapter 5), so now 'if some . . . person desires some other . . . he wouldn't . . . desire . . . or love him, if he didn't actually in some way belong to him . . .' is designed – so we propose – to recall and evoke the conclusion that immediately followed: that 'if you [Lysis] become wise, everyone will be friend to you and everyone will be *oikeioi* to you . . .' This is the main reason why at 222A4 Lysis is silent, while Menexenus gives unqualified assent. For Menexenus, of course, was not there when Lysis was humbled; by contrast Lysis would have every reason for falling (momentarily) silent at this reminder of his gentle refutation at Socrates' hands. '[I]f any person desires any other . . . he wouldn't ever [do it]

if he didn't . . . in some way belong . . . either in relation to the soul or in relation to some characteristic of the soul, or ways or form': in light of that original conversation with Socrates, Lysis will naturally understand the 'either in relation to the soul', etc., in terms of wisdom.¹⁸ The 'lesson' he learned – we need not necessarily suppose that he would still swallow it whole, even if he did then – was that someone's being *oikeios*, 'belonging', to anyone depended on his being, or becoming, wise; and it is perhaps partly to set off this connection in Lysis' mind, with that earlier conversation (and specifically 210D), that Socrates belatedly adds 'nor would he love (*philein*)' in 222A1 ('if . . . any one person desires . . . or feels passion . . . , he wouldn't ever desire, or feel passion, *or love him*'). For of course the original context was framed in terms, not of desire or passion (the new point of focus in 221E7–222A3), but of 'loving' (*philein*), as between parents and children, fellow-citizens, and so on.¹⁹ So the lover is now, in effect, put in the same position as those other 'friends', and *oikeioi*, of the darling (in this case, Lysis): his parents. Rather precisely so, if we may retrospectively take 210C2–3 'anything else that may belong more closely to us than [our parents]' as making the same point as the *oikeios pēi* of 222A2 ('. . . if [the lover] didn't *in some way belong*'): there is something more *oikeios* to us than either our parents or our lovers.

Socrates' argument will apply to all kinds or species of love. Nevertheless, desire and passion, and the passionate subject, have suddenly become the framing terms in 221A7–222A3 because Socrates is closing on his conclusion (222A6–7), which will be directed, as it were at its most visible level, to the common-or-garden lover Hippothales (see his reaction to the conclusion, at 222B2). Nor, probably, is Lysis himself unaware of this dimension, since he can scarcely have avoided hearing about Hippothales' passion (Hippothales has made no secret, to others, about his feelings). Here we should notice²⁰ the potential ambiguity of the final word of the sentence in 222A3: *eidos*. 'Form', we translated it, and supposed that for Socrates, and (probably) for Lysis, the reference would have been to 'form', or 'type', of soul ('wise';

¹⁸ 'Either in relation to the soul or in relation to some characteristic of the soul, or ways or form': 'in relation to the soul' and 'in relation to some characteristic of the soul', etc. (which hardly seem to represent genuine alternatives) will presumably give him a further push in the same direction; the puzzling trio 'characteristic . . . or ways or form' – on which see further below – perhaps, in Lysis' case, has the effect of saying 'well, *something* to do with the soul (don't you see?)'. Wisdom, and the love of it (*philosophia*), will plainly involve distinctive traits, habits of life, type of 'soul', or mind (if, that is, 'ways or form' does attach to 'the soul': cf. n. 13 above, and see further below).

¹⁹ But in any case, of course, *epithumein* and *eran* imply *philein*; and Socrates has every reason to remind us of that, since so much of the preceding discussion has been couched in the language of *philein*, and 'friendship'.

²⁰ See n. 13 above.

or, for Socrates, just ‘philosophical?’). But in the context of Hippothales’ passion, it is an *eidos* of a different sort that will be in question – Lysis’ *eidos*, his physical form, or beauty, which was said at 204E5–6 to be spectacular: ‘Because I’m sure there’s little chance of your not knowing what the boy looks like [his *eidos*]; he’s good-looking enough to be known just from that alone,’ said Ctesippus. So Hippothales, we speculate, and perhaps Menexenus (not, except maybe for a fleeting moment, Lysis?), will read Socrates as saying, in a roundabout way, that the lover will be *oikeios* to the object of love either in soul . . . or in *body*.²¹ For, we suggest, Hippothales will probably so read *eidos* as to make what Socrates says yield ‘either in relation to the soul or in relation to some characteristic of the soul, or ways or <beauty of physical> form’.²² That is, he will take Socrates’ general statement as allowing in the full range of his own preoccupations, which are distinctly unlikely to be restricted to Lysis’ soul.

For Socrates, however, there can surely be no doubt that ‘form’ is form (‘type’) of soul: ‘ways or form’ in his phrasing are to be taken as parallel to ‘some characteristic’, and so as being ‘ways or form’ of (the) soul.²³ If anyone desires/feels passion for/loves anyone else, he must ‘belong’, be *oikeios*, in some way to that person in relation to the soul/some aspect of soul: of soul, not merely because of the first conversation between Socrates and Lysis, but because of the continuous, if implicit, identification since then of the good, and then of the ultimate good, with wisdom or knowledge. If anyone loves anyone else, it must be because the loved one provides some sort of path to knowledge (‘in relation to the soul . . .’): that is what will make him ‘belong to’ the one loving, and so will also make the one loving ‘belong to’, ‘related to’, ‘kin to’, the one loved. Or so we propose to fill out Socrates’ formulation. *He* spells nothing out, indeed – to refer once again to his curious phrasing in 222A2–3 – ‘either in relation to the soul . . .’ seems partly designed to allow him to avoid spelling things out.²⁴ The immediate effect is to leave him the space simultaneously to hint at more ordinary views of desire and passion, thus underlining, for the reader who can get as far or further than Lysis, how different his, Socrates’ own views are.

²¹ Cf. 218B8–C2 for the pair soul/body.

²² Some kind of confirmation of the ambiguity of *eidos* comes from the judgements of modern translators: it is ‘aspect’ (of the soul) for Lombardo, but ‘l’aspect physique’ for Dorion (who takes the sequence ‘either in relation to the soul’, etc. as referring to a hierarchy of types of ‘amitié’).

²³ This is by no means inevitable, from the mere shape of the Greek – the phrasing of which, as a whole, is rather curious (there seem to be no doubts about the text). But that perhaps in itself helps to confirm that Socrates is up to something.

²⁴ See n. 18 above.

To sum up where we have got to in 221E5–222A3/4: (a) Menexenus and Lysis must belong to each other in some way if they are friends, (b) any lover must belong in some way to his beloved, and (c) he must belong to him ‘either in relation to the soul or . . .’, where (c), depending on how we read it, will cover a range of possible respects in which (b)²⁵ might hold. Socrates now makes two last moves in the present sequence, clearly separated from 221E5–222A4 by a ‘Very well’ (*eien*). The first move is to remind Menexenus and Lysis of something the three of them have agreed to: ‘What naturally belongs to us, then – it’s become evident to us that it’s necessary to love it.’ The ‘necessary’ is reasonable enough, for *all* desire has been agreed to be for what ‘naturally belongs’. ‘It seems so’, replies Menexenus,²⁶ evidently, and understandably, with some wariness: he knows Socrates is cooking something up, and doesn’t know quite what it is.

And here it is: ‘*It’s necessary, in that case, for the genuine lover, one who’s not pretended, to be loved by his darling.*’ Now taken by itself, and out of the context of Socrates’ real argument, the proposal looks absurd, even outrageous – and is meant to. So all a lover has to do is to be sincere, and he’s home and dry? That, to judge from his reaction in 222B6, is how Hippothales takes it: ‘there was no mistaking Hippothales’ pleasure, which made him go all sorts of colours’. Lysis and Menexenus too, for all that both of them are way ahead of Hippothales when it comes to seeing beyond that merely superficial (and hopeful) reaction, are extremely reluctant to accept Socrates’ proposal – Menexenus, on this occasion, being as slow to give his assent as Lysis (‘Lysis and Menexenus barely somehow nodded assent,’ 222B1), even though he is presumably still as far behind Lysis in understanding Socrates as he was at A4. For Socrates has put his conclusion in about as provocative a way as he could, for a pair of young boys who are no doubt aware of the effect their beauty has on older males – older males like Hippothales, whose reaction confirms, if confirmation were needed, how A6–7 would have to be taken by anyone who hadn’t followed the argument. Even Lysis, who understands more, will likely be feeling a tension between the sort of thing he suspects the conclusion *ought* to be saying, and what it obviously *seems* to be saying.²⁷ But neither of the boys should really be hesitating at Socrates’ conclusion; or at any rate Lysis has no

²⁵ And also, up to a point, (a): see above.

²⁶ Who appears to be the speaker; even if it was Lysis that was last referred to (‘but Lysis said nothing’, 222A4), it seems natural to make Menexenus the subject of ‘he said’ in A6, as he undoubtedly was of ‘he said’ two lines before. (Or, to put it another way, we should need stronger evidence that Lysis has broken his silence; only in B1 is a response from him clearly indicated.)

²⁷ That is, he has seen exactly what Hippothales has failed to see (compare Hippothales’ earlier failure to grasp that the words he thought were praising Lysis were really in praise of himself: 205D–206A);

cause to hesitate. The lesson of that first conversation he had with Socrates, to which the latter's immediately preceding contributions, in 221E–222A, have referred the boy (and us), was – as we, Penner and Rowe, proposed to read it – that the one who loves wants the one he loves to be wise, because wisdom gives happiness (and loving someone involves wanting that person to be happy).

So now it is clear why Socrates wanted Lysis to remember their initial conversation, to reproduce it for Menexenus, and to come back and ask if he should forget anything: because, despite its admixture of play, it forms an organic part of the overall argument of the dialogue. (See 211A9–B2, and Chapter 2 above.) Providing that we may suppose the ‘genuine’ lover to be the one who loves in this way, i.e. wanting his beloved to be wise, and provided also that this ‘genuine’ lover would in fact contribute towards the beloved’s wisdom, the latter would *have* to love him; for according to Socrates’ argument in the *Lysis*, what we love is what is good for us – what ‘naturally belongs to’ us. But what else would the ‘genuine’ lover be except the one who meets the requirements for loving other people, and who actually does have something to contribute to the development of the beloved (rather than having some general commitment to his development, without much idea of what *real* development would be)? A ‘pretended’ lover, by contrast, would be someone who either had no real desire for the beloved’s happiness, or who knew nothing about what it might consist in; or both.²⁸ Someone, in fact, like Hippothales, whose poems, as Socrates suggested, while purporting to be in praise of Lysis, in fact referred to himself (205D–E), and whose way of taking what Socrates appears to offer him at 222A5–6 is enough to show that he is the last person to give lessons in wisdom.

Thus even while appearing, to Hippothales, to have been telling Lysis that he should give in to Hippothales, Socrates has actually been telling him that he needs a lover of a quite different sort.²⁹ A cruel irony, one might think; not so cruel, though, given that Lysis’ happiness is involved. As for who might do better as Lysis’ lover than Hippothales, there is surely only one candidate:

that is what he was pondering silently to himself just now, at 222A4. But now, we propose, Socrates’ provocative wording makes him wonder – ‘Fine, so perhaps after all Socrates isn’t really telling me to love Hippothales; but why *isn’t* Hippothales a genuine lover? There doesn’t seem to be any pretence, exactly, about his passion, when he keeps going on so about it, or so my cousin and my friends tell me . . .’

²⁸ For the figure of the ‘pretended’ lover, cf. the comparison of misleading *logoi* to human impostors at 218D.

²⁹ In fact, 221E7–222A3 must already be talking about genuine lovers, insofar as it specifies *oikeiōtēs in relation to soul*. But Socrates prefers to take a breath, with his ‘Very well’, and move to his conclusion in a last, separate, flourish.

Socrates. Of course he does not put himself forward as a candidate – and how could he, when he is ‘useless’ in (virtually) everything (204B8–C1)? Yet at the same time, he has in fact been taking Lysis forward, and Menexenus too: what better demonstration of ‘genuine’ love – as Socrates has identified it – could there be? And what more justification would we need for his modest suggestion, in the closing sentence of the dialogue: ‘. . . [sc. people will say that] we [Lysis, Menexenus and he] think that we’re friends of one another – for I count myself too as one of you’ (223B6–7)?³⁰

One thing that is absolutely certain, we (Penner and Rowe) hold, is that 222A6–7 (‘the genuine lover must be loved by his darling’) cannot say what Hippothales takes it to say – that is, even apart from the deep interpretation of the argument of the dialogue, and of the role of 222A6–7 in that argument. This is not just because at Hippothales’ level the claim is absurd (not that that would bother Hippothales), but because it is actually *the conclusion of, rounds off, Socrates’ whole argument*, and with Hippothales’ reading it comes nowhere even close to doing that. It is 222B3 that is critical here: Socrates there immediately proposes to ‘take a look at the argument (*logos*)’, which seems most naturally taken as suggesting that ‘the argument’ has just ended, with A6–7, and with Lysis’ and Menexenus’ grudging acceptance of A6–7. Their resistance, just like Lysis’ silence a few moments back, serves as a signal to us that we need to dig deeper; so too Hippothales’ joyful, uncomprehending, acceptance of the absurd. The results of that necessary excavation we have presented above.

POSTSCRIPT

Could we not – one might finally ask – treat the whole of 221D6–222B2 as a bit of stage-management, as it were?³¹ Plato is beginning to wind up the action of the dialogue, perhaps; he wants to bring Hippothales back in again to bring the plot full circle, and so allows Socrates a bit of mere mischievous play. Such an explanation would account for many of the features of the passage. But it would leave just too much out. Why, for

³⁰ N.b. 222B8–C1 ‘to concede that what is useless is a friend strikes a false note’. So that qualification to Socrates’ claim to uselessness will be important: ‘I am, myself, of mean ability, indeed useless, in respect to everything else, but this much in a way has been given me from god, the capacity to recognize quickly a lover and an object of love,’ 204B8–C2. Can it be an accident that the main argument of the dialogue ends with a conclusion about the *genuine* lover – and in a context which claims to have identified the real object of his love?

³¹ Such a question is given particular urgency for Rowe by the fact that he (not so Penner) was originally satisfied with a version of the ‘stage-management’ interpretation, and came only belatedly – and unfortunately after the publication of Rowe 2000 – to see that it would not wash.

example, that emphasis in A6–7 on the lover's being 'genuine', and 'not pretended'? (What would be the point of that?) More pressingly, Socrates goes back to obviously serious stuff in the next section, 222B3–D8; how will that fit with mere mischievousness here? Most pressing of all would be the question why Socrates should choose to *wind up* 'the argument'³² in this particular way? What would be the point of ending with a mere joke, and one moreover that Socrates' two interlocutors obviously have difficulty in sharing ('Lysis and Menexenus barely somehow nodded assent,' 222B1)? And there is a more general question: how would such a strategy fit in with Socrates' comportment elsewhere in the *Lysis*? Play there has been aplenty, but it has always been play with an edge. In short, Socrates ought to be offering us, and Menexenus and Lysis, more than this; if he is not, we should be asking for our money back.

What is clearly needed is a reading of Socrates' argument, and its conclusion in 222A6–7, that leaves him saying something that at the least is not silly, and at best not only rounds off but is worthy of the careful argumentation that has preceded. Our reading, we claim, fulfils all these requirements. It provides Socrates' argument overall with a suitably weighty conclusion – about the importance for us human beings of understanding what is truly desirable, truly good and beneficial in life; at the same time it provides a conclusion that is consistent with, indeed is implied by, what has preceded it, and gives shape and sense to the various parts of that preceding argument. Any tendency to object 'well, if *that's* what it all means, Plato has a very strange and roundabout way of going about it' will surely have ceased to have much bite, for it is just obvious that the author has chosen to operate obliquely and indirectly, forcing us his readers, and his original listeners/readers, to piece things together very much for ourselves. (Leaving aside for the moment the foolish Hippothales, will *anyone* seriously, in the end, want to insist that 222A6–7 – 'It's necessary . . . for the genuine lover, one who's not pretended, to be loved by his darling' – says that a lover like *Hippothales* should be loved by his darling?) But here we need to make a careful distinction. Quite a lot of the philosophical matter of the *Lysis* is actually on or near the surface; indeed, in the long stretch from 217A3–221D6, as we have seen, Socrates comes close to straight exposition, or at least to a transparent dialectic. The parts that we have to work for are the parts that lie beyond that – generally, the parts that we need in order to flesh out and give concrete sense to the more direct, and essentially more formal, lessons that the dialogue teaches. But perhaps, since Socrates himself is still

³² As, again, 222B3 ('And I said, wanting to take a look at the argument . . .') shows that he is doing.

only a lover and not a possessor of wisdom, that is appropriate enough; the form of the *Lysis* reproduces its content.

One final possibility: have we *over-interpreted*? That is an objection that has surfaced several times as we – Penner and Rowe – have presented our preliminary results to others (especially, as it happens, philosophers). The objection has been raised particularly in the context of our interpretations of the dramatic detail of the dialogue: Lysis' silence, the boys' reaction to 222A6–7, and so on. Our response to this is simply to say that it seems odd to insist, in advance, that particular elements of an artefact will be merely accidental, or ornamental, or anything of the sort, if they *could* be part of an overall, determinedly philosophical, design.³³ In short, we feel quite unmoved by the objection.

³³ Is it not reasonable to ask, e.g., why Lysis is silent when he is, and not Menexenus, and why Lysis is silent at this point and not at others; and only to give up asking if we cannot find answers?

222B3–E7: some further questions from Socrates about the argument, leading to (apparent) impasse

Socrates' desire to 'take a look at the argument' (222B3) expresses itself in a very particular form. He has two questions to put to Lysis and Menexenus:

And I said, wanting to take a look at the argument (*logos*), 'If belonging (*to oikeion*) is different from being like (*to homoion*),¹ then we'd be saying something worth saying, so 222B5 it seems to me, Lysis and Menexenus, about what a friend (*philos/philon*) is; but if it's actually the case that they're the same thing, like (*homoion*) and belonging (*oikeion*), it's not easy to discard our previous argument (*logos*) to the effect that like was useless to like with respect to their likeness, and to concede that what is useless 222C1 is a friend (*philon*) strikes a false note.² So are you prepared,' I said, 'since we're intoxicated with our argument,³ that we should agree to say that belonging is something different from being like?'

'Yes, absolutely.'

'Shall we then also lay it down that the good belongs [is *oikeion*] to everyone,⁴ and the bad is 222C5 alien [*allotriion*,⁵ sc. to everyone]? Or [shall we lay it down] that the bad belongs to the bad, to the good the good, and to the neither good nor bad the neither good nor bad?'

They both said it seemed to them like this, that each 222D1 belongs to each. (222B3–D1)

One of the effects of the first of Socrates' questions here (is belonging different from being like, or the same?) is to allow him to clear up the sort of mistake that – as we suggested in Chapter 6 above – might have encouraged Lysis and Menexenus to agree so enthusiastically to Socrates'

¹ Or 'the like', but 'the belonging' for *to oikeion* would not be even remotely English.

² See Chapter 6, n. 30 above. ³ I.e. and so feeling uninhibited?

⁴ Or 'everything' (*panti*, c4, could be either masculine or neuter), since elsewhere in the passage, where gender is identifiable, we have neuters. But as so often in the *Lysis*, the neuter embraces the masculine. (At D3–4, we have masculines at least in subject position, probably in objection position too: compare 214B–E, to which D3–4 refers. In the end, it will always be a masculine – and so, given Greek linguistic habits, personal – subject that is meant, while the object may be either neuter or masculine, i.e. personal, insofar as we can 'love', be motivated towards, either things or people.)

⁵ That familiar contrary of *oikeion*, referring to what does not belong, belongs to another (210C1, 4, etc.).

suggestion in 222E5–6 that if the two of them were friends, they must ‘in some way naturally belong the one to the other’ – perhaps in part because they are focusing on that ‘in some way’, instead of on what ‘belongs’ (*is oikeion simpliciter*). Now Socrates insists, silkily but firmly (‘let’s lose our inhibitions, and come to an agreement . . .’), that ‘belonging’ isn’t a matter of being alike, having things in common. But the question also has other advantages. One such advantage is that it allows Socrates to bring back into the open that connection between the *philon*, the ‘friend’, the *oikeion*, what ‘belongs’, and the good: ‘. . . and to concede that what is useless is a friend strikes a false note’, B8–C1. One theme that has been constant throughout the discussion is that a friend is, and must be, *useful*, or⁶ *good*. And this is the starting point for Socrates’ second and much more important question: ‘Shall we then also lay it down that the good belongs to everyone, and the bad is alien? Or that the bad belongs to the bad, to the good the good, and to the neither good nor bad the neither good nor bad?’

This question, we propose, is fundamental to the whole project of the *Lysis*, which no doubt makes it a suitable way to round the dialogue off. The boys are being given a choice between saying (1) that the good is *oikeion*, ‘belongs’ to, everybody, and saying (2) that what is *oikeion* to a person will vary according to whether that person is assigned to one or other of three familiar categories: good to good, bad to bad, and neither good nor bad to neither good nor bad. The boys take the second option of the two offered: ‘They both said it seemed to them like this, that each belongs to each’ (E7–D1).

Now in one way this is distinctly surprising. Hasn’t Socrates himself, in effect, openly given Lysis and Menexenus the answer to this very question only two sentences back? ‘To concede that what is useless [i.e. not good] is a friend strikes a false note,’ he said at 222B8–C1; and since this must be a quite general claim, it will already be a given, in light of the identification of the good with what ‘belongs’ (an identity brought back to the surface of the argument by 222B8–C1 itself), that it is the good that ‘belongs’ to everyone. And it is not as if this is a new point; it is one he has spent some time working up to, even if it has not formally been stated. So, according to Socrates’ argument, nothing except the good could in fact be good to anyone. (Moreover, as we have proposed, that same argument has as one

⁶ We remind the reader that the *useful* and the *beneficial* for Socrates are not – as *the useful* is, for the most part, in Aristotle – something that is a means to some subordinate good that may itself in some circumstances be sub-optimal (what tends to get identified in modern discussions with ‘instrumental means’, which ‘merely instrumental means’ are then crudely contrasted – by moderns – with the moral good alone). Rather the useful is what leads to an ultimate good (or is itself an ultimate good).

of its by-products that there are no good and no bad human beings.)⁷ Why then should Socrates now be offering Lysis and Menexenus a choice between saying what they have in effect already agreed to, on the one hand, and, on the other, saying something that would drive a coach and horses through their previous agreements? At least part of the point seems to be just that the boys do not yet have a firm enough grasp on things to give the right answer. If Socrates had asked them directly ‘Does everyone desire the good, or do different sorts of people desire different sorts of things?’, perhaps neither of the two would have had much hesitation in plumping for the first option, insofar as they have gone along with it up to now – as indeed they have even in their last response, in c3 (‘Yes, absolutely’), which will have included assent to 222B8–c1.⁸ But as soon as a slightly different question is put to them (‘Shall we . . . lay it down that the good belongs [is *oikeion*] to everyone, and the bad is alien . . .?’), they take their eye off the ball, and respond in a way that is actually equivalent to denying the very thing they have previously accepted, that we all desire the good, and the good alone. For, to repeat, they have just been reminded that ‘belonging’, *oikeiotes*, which is what accounts for a thing’s being loved, isn’t a matter of being like; it’s a matter of being *useful* (good).

Nevertheless, it is certainly far from an easy thing, despite Socrates’ hints, to see that ‘the good belongs to everyone’ actually says the same as ‘everyone desires the good’.⁹ If the two boys do not see it (as they do not), that should not be surprising. What causes their failure? They *ought* to have got ‘belonging’ straight, and its connection with good. The thing that seems to throw them is rather their being offered that choice between saying that good ‘belongs’ to all, and saying that good ‘belongs’ to good, bad to bad, neither-good-nor-bad to neither-good-nor-bad. But why should *that* throw them?

Here is our suggestion. It is the *universality* of Socrates’ claim about desire and the good that is both, in a way, its most distinctive feature and the one that is likely to look – to almost anyone else, or at any rate anyone who has not been witness to, or has not (completely?) followed Socrates’ argument – the least persuasive aspect of it. *Everyone* desires the good, and nothing else: that is the claim. Nor does this amount to saying just that only what is good is (truly) *loveable*. It is that only what is good is ever (truly) *loved*.

⁷ See especially 220D5–6, where he seemed to suggest that all human beings are ‘between the bad and the good’, i.e. neither good nor bad (on which see Chapter 5, §D above).

⁸ 222B8–c1: ‘To concede that what is useless [i.e. not good] is a friend strikes a false note’ (see above).

⁹ Penner himself admits to having taken some time to work out how to take ‘the good is *oikeion* to everyone’ (and Rowe would probably have to admit to it if he could remember).

(Compare, for example, that extended essay in 207D–210D on the way that doing what one wants depends on knowledge.) Now if asked ‘does everyone desire what is good, or do people desire different things, according to their different natures?’, most people – that is, outside the special context of the argument of the *Lysis* – would presumably take the second option. What we’d be inclined to say straight off is that we *don’t*, surely, all desire what is actually good for us, and that is just the trouble; we all too often desire things that don’t do us any good at all. Yet the discussion in the *Lysis*, from almost the beginning to end, has been about *any and every case* of desire or ‘friendship’. What Socrates and the boys have been discussing is how to account for the phenomenon of human desiring in general. When the bad was ruled out as a possible object of ‘friendship’, that meant precisely that no one could actually desire it. Such a proposal runs counter to all ordinary assumptions;¹⁰ and Socrates’ pair of alternatives at C3–7 (‘Shall we then also lay it down that the good belongs to everyone, or . . .?’) brings home that fact. But, understandably, as we readily admit, the boys go the wrong way. Socrates offers them what is, in effect, the crowning or chief point of his analysis, and they fail to see it.¹¹

For all that they have gone along with the argument, and have apparently been committed to its conclusions, nevertheless – not having been able to put together the complete picture – the boys finally, and understandably, opt for the safe and familiar: *of course* different things ‘belong’ to different sorts of people. Nor can this be just a matter of their not seeing the implications of their choice. For they understand immediately when Socrates responds that, if they are right, then the conversation will be back where it was some time ago, and the three of them will be saying that the bad will be friend to the bad no less than the good to the good (and so on: DI–8). He does not need to explain to them how that will follow from their choosing in the way they have. Certainly they may not have seen it at the moment they made their choice; so that they are not actually *saying*, in 222C7–DI

¹⁰ If this is so contrary to ordinary assumptions, how *can* we rule out that the bad is a possible object of friendship? How can it be that one acts on a desire that is harmful, if one did not desire what is harmful? The idea here, we suggest, is something like this (Chapter 10 will provide an ampler answer): when a desire one acts on proves harmful, that is because one chose as a means an action that was in fact harmful, though it was believed (falsely) to be a means to some real good. In that case it was the real good that was desired, not the action that led to the harm. The agent’s state of mind is not well represented by ‘I want to do this action’. Nor is it well represented by ‘I want to do this action whatever it may lead to, even if that is harm.’ It is best represented, rather, as ‘I want to do this action, i.e. the particular action which is in fact the best means to my good.’ When the agent finds out that the ‘i.e.’ will fail, since this action is *not* the best means to the agent’s best end, he or she has to choose as to what really *was* the object of desire – the action actually done that ends up harmful, or the good he or she wrongly thought he or she would get as a result of the action.

¹¹ The *Lysis* would not be the only dialogue to end in this kind of way; see e.g. *Euthyphro* 14B–C, where Socrates actually remarks on Euthyphro’s muffing it.

(when they are recorded simply as accepting the second option Socrates is offering them), that on their view the bad can be friend to the bad as much as good to the good (and so on: 21–8) – indeed their responses in 21–8 show that they don't want to say such things at all. Yet at the same time neither do they show any inclination to go back and say 'Well, then we made the wrong choice.' It looks as if they want to have it both ways. On the one hand, they don't want to abandon the argument, which they have gone along with all the way. But on the other hand, neither do they want to give up their attachment to the idea that what is *oikeion*, 'belongs', to people (sc. and so – though the boys don't at the time spell this out to themselves – what people desire, what is *philon* to them) depends on, or at least corresponds to, the kind of people they are.

And it is easy enough to sympathize with them. It seems for example natural and obvious enough to (claim to) describe individuals in terms of their likes and dislikes, as Socrates does earlier on in the *Lysis* itself: there are horse-lovers, quail-lovers, dog-lovers, wine-lovers, lovers of physical exercise or of wisdom (212D). By 222, we have come to be operating with just three categories, of the good, the bad, and the neither good nor bad, so that the question will naturally be framed in terms of these: will the good be *oikeion* (and so an object of love) to all three categories, or will something different be *oikeion* to each?

So if Lysis and Menexenus plump for the second of these two options, that is in a way not at all shocking; wouldn't most of us? Indeed, Socrates could even be said to have encouraged them to take this fork, when he allowed in that more relaxed kind of talk about friendship, lovers and 'belonging' at 221E–222A, alongside the strict account permitting us no more than *one, true, friend* (that 'first' one that is truly 'ours'): that is, when he allowed talk about Lysis and Menexenus being friends (*if* they were friends), about their 'belonging to' each other ('in some way'), and about the lover's 'belonging to' his darling ('in some way'). (See Chapter 6, above, §(b).) That might be enough to lull them into thinking that they were back on familiar ground – enough to lull even Lysis, whose grasp on Socrates' argument at 222A4 has evidently slipped a little by B1 (see Chapter 6, n. 27 above); perhaps even after that reminder in 222B3–C3 about the difference between 'belonging' and being like. Their being lulled in this way seems, psychologically, and dramatically, wholly plausible, and will also be grist to Plato's mill. ('See just how attractive our ordinary assumptions are. But these are just the things I want to question, and reject.')

Yet at the same time, in terms of where we are in the *Lysis*, and how far we have come in the argument, the boys' choice quite certainly *is* a shock: that is, because it runs counter to what they've agreed to, down to a few

lines – and moments – before. Their prompt and reasonable responses at 222C3 ('Yes, absolutely'), and then in DI–8, rule out any chance that their choice here in C7–DI is because they have suddenly turned unco-operative. These responses clearly suggest that any unhappiness they were feeling in 222A–B has not lasted ('At that Lysis and Menexenus barely somehow nodded assent,' B1);¹² the conversation is back on an even keel. The cause of their voting against their previous agreements, we might sum up by saying, is that the mode in which Socrates puts the options – one that does not make the implications of their choice immediately clear – allows them to vote just as they would have done if they had not had a conversation with Socrates at all. That, however, as we have suggested, is the way *anyone* would feel naturally inclined to vote (or at least without Socrates' having got to them). In that sense, the boys' response to Socrates' question is likely, in a sense, also to be the reader's. With a marvellous simplicity, Plato registers just how far Socrates' argument has taken him, and – up to a point – Lysis and Menexenus, from the ordinary, obvious-seeming, 'common-sense' (?) point of view.

In any case, showing an independence that most modern readers fail to notice, Lysis and Menexenus do not take the option they should at 222C7–DI: that is, the first option (the good belongs to everyone), which is the choice that would be consistent with what they've agreed before. No, they say, it's not the case that the good 'belongs' to everyone; different things 'belong' to different sorts of people. Socrates immediately and unsurprisingly responds by pointing out that this answer will mean their falling back into positions they'd previously abandoned:

'In that case (*ara*),' I said, 'we've fallen back into things said (*logoi*) about friendship that we discarded the first time round; for the unjust person will be friend (*philos*) to the unjust and the bad to the bad no less than the good to the good.'

222D5 'It appears so,' he [Menexenus?] said.

'And what's more (*ti de*), if we say that being good and belonging (*to agathon kai to oikeion*) are the same thing, won't the good person be friend only to the good?'

'Yes, absolutely.'

'And yet we thought we had refuted that too, ourselves; or don't you remember?'

'We remember.' (222DI–8)

It might at first appear that 222D5–6 'if we say that being good and belonging are the same thing' refers to the first of the options offered to Lysis

¹² So that apparently unpalatable conclusion at 222A6–7, about the necessity for a beloved to love any genuine lover, has been forgotten. And why not, when Socrates has gone back to apparently more straightforward, unthreatening, general questions ('is the *oikeion* the same as, or different from, the like? . . .').

and Menexenus in c3–7, i.e. that ‘the good belongs to everyone’. If that were indeed the reference of 222D5–6, Socrates would be saying that their rejection of those earlier ‘things said’ (*logoi*, D1–2) would mean the rejection of *both* options now offered: *both* that different things ‘belong’ to different people, *and* that the good ‘belongs’ to everyone. But that would be extraordinary, for two reasons. First, the previous arguments (i.e. down to 222B2) do not in fact entail the rejection of both options; they *support* one of them (‘the good belongs to everyone’). Second, there seems no possible way of deriving from ‘the good belongs to everyone’ that only good will be friend to good (D6). So we need a different explanation of ‘if we say that being good and belonging are the same thing’ here in 222D5–6. The simplest and most natural explanation is that the identity of good and ‘belonging’ somehow follows just from the rejection of the possibility of bad’s being friend to bad (and so of bad’s ‘belonging’ to bad). And so it will, if we take it that the new context simply reproduces, in an abbreviated form, the argument of 214B–215C (modified, of course, in light of one crucial development that has taken place since: the introduction of the good as ‘belonging’). That context, we (Penner and Rowe) propose, is what Socrates is referring to in D1–2 (the ‘things said about friendship that we discarded the first time round’). As there in 214–15, so here in 222D, we begin with the idea (though this is exactly what Socrates wants, finally, to *reject*) that any one of three categories of objects may be *oikeion* to any one of three categories of subject. (This is what is implicit in the second option in c3–7: the one we are considering, because the boys have plumped for it.) Now if we desire what ‘belongs’, then (on that second option) apparently the bad will desire the bad no less than the good the good (D3–4), which we declared impossible (214B7–C4). But then, if what belongs is only the good (D5–6: cf. 214C4–E1), then – given that ‘belonging’ is still a two-way relation¹³ – only good will be friend to good. It is perhaps because we are, in effect, back in the context of 214–15 that 222D1–8 makes no reference to the category of the neither-good-nor-bad; for in 214–15, that category had yet to be introduced. In short, what Socrates is doing in 222D1–8 is faithfully to reproduce the shape of his argument in the earlier passage, with the difference that it is now done in terms of ‘belonging’. The effect of these eight lines is to slow us down, and to underline just how much of what has preceded will be ‘discarded’ (*apobalesthai*, D2) if the boys have their way.¹⁴

¹³ See Chapter 6, pp. 164–70 above.

¹⁴ At the same time, the passage reinforces our claim that, at least up until now, the argument has been essentially *cumulative*: the gains of those earlier exchanges are meant to be real.

So now, Socrates suggests, the argument has turned out to be useless:

222EI ‘What use, then, could¹⁵ we still make of our argument (*logos*)? Or is it clear that there wouldn’t be any [sc. use in it]? So I need, like experts [“the wise”, *hoi sophoi*] in the law-courts, to go back over¹⁶ everything that’s been said: if neither those who are loved nor those who love nor the like nor the unlike nor the good **222E5** nor those who belong nor all the other things we’ve gone through – for I for one don’t any longer remember, there were so many of them, but anyway if none of these things is friend (*philon*), I no longer have any idea what to say.’ (222EI–7)

It is tempting to translate the third sentence here as ‘So I *ask you* (Lysis and Menexenus) to go back over everything that’s been said,’ i.e. to reconsider everything, ponder over it, but the signs are that the ‘going back over’ is done in the following lines, i.e. in ε3 ff.¹⁷ The burden of it is ‘We seem to have got nowhere. So let me just count over the number of options we’ve considered: there’s this, that, and the other . . . , and if it isn’t any of those, I don’t know what to say.’

In other words, Socrates is either flummoxed, or pretending to be flummoxed. Given what happens next, the odds appear to be firmly on the latter alternative: ‘When I’d said that, I had it in mind at that point to disturb some other member of the older set; and then the boys’ guardians came up, like gods of some sort’ (223AI–2), and prevented it – i.e. brought the action to a close like the *deus ex machina*, the god who sometimes appears on a kind of crane at the end of a tragedy. A strange sort of gods, one might reasonably say, given the guardians’ (slave-tutors’) behaviour – aggressive enough to make it look as if they’ve had a bit too much to drink (B1–2); and as Socrates has himself suggested at 209A–B, age by itself doesn’t bring wisdom. If it did, he’d be wise, since he’s an ‘old man’ (223B5, though we don’t know how seriously we should take this description: how old is ‘old’, when

¹⁵ How should one understand the potential here (optative + *an*)? It should perhaps at least be noticed that Socrates does not use the future indicative or the deliberative subjunctive (‘What shall we/What are we to do with the argument?’), which might have been a more obvious way of expressing the despair or frustration that we’re evidently meant to suppose him to be expressing. But whatever form of words he used, we should no doubt still have to wonder how seriously to take him. See further below.

¹⁶ Or ‘ponder over’ (see LSJ s.v. *anapempazomai*, and *Laws* 724B)? But the reference to lawyers seems to suggest a summing up (of the sort that immediately ensues), and the following *gar* is most naturally taken as fulfilling a promise just made – hence our colon in ε3: ‘. . . everything that’s been said: if (*ei gar*) . . .’. (The verb in question, *anapempazomai*, is rare, so that we have little of the sort of comparative material needed to establish its precise range; the meaning offered by the late lexicographer Hesychius, ‘resume what has been said before’, might possibly be based on our passage.)

¹⁷ See preceding note; and one would look for a *humōn*, ‘you’ (‘I ask *you*’). (A copyist in one of the manuscripts seems to have suggested changing the infinitive *anapempasasthai* to a plural imperative, *anapempasasthe*: ‘So I ask [sc. of you] . . . go back over everything . . .’.)

compared with adolescents?). Socrates is teasing again, and the chances are that he is teasing, if to more serious purpose, in 222E1–7 too. But so he must be in any case. All he had to do was to suggest to Lysis and Menexenus that they take the first of the two options at c3–7 and ‘lay it down that the good belongs to everyone, and the bad is alien [to everyone]’, instead of the option they actually took – the second, that ‘the bad belongs to the bad, to the good the good, and to the neither good nor bad the neither good nor bad’. This will be enough to save the candidacy of the *oikeion simpliciter*, as what truly benefits us, for the role of (sole) friend, *philon* (for everyone);¹⁸ and not only is there nothing in the *logos* or argument down to 222B2¹⁹ to block this conclusion, but the whole of that *logos* actually leads to it.

Why does Socrates not make this simple move? Although in the latter stages of the argument he has been in something close to didactic mode, in the *Lysis* as a whole he has preferred the role of co-investigator. Might the explanation perhaps be simply that to end in impasse, or apparent impasse, will serve to return him to that role? But if the ‘impasse’ is in fact nothing of the sort, as our analysis of the end-game proposes, there will be equal justification for saying that it actually marks his final, if disguised, abandonment of the role in question – which simply raises the original question again: why doesn’t he go back to that first option (the good as what ‘belongs’ to everyone)? Indeed, if anything, the fact that he doesn’t do so looks, on this particular interpretation, even more puzzling.

A more satisfying explanation, and the one we propose, is that it is Plato’s way of indicating his awareness of the highly radical nature of the claim he has argued for, that the good is what ‘belongs’ to everyone, and what everyone desires, and correspondingly of indicating his awareness of the attraction of the view that Lysis and Menexenus take up (isn’t it *natural* to suppose that things are like that, and that different sorts of people desire different sorts of things?). But this is not to say that he is in any way *apologizing* for the first position. The situation is exactly reversed: it is not the first but the second position, its more ordinary rival, that causes the impasse. *That* is the one that has turned out to be untenable: i.e., given Socrates’ argument, one simply cannot hold that ‘the bad belongs to the bad, to the good the good, and to the neither good nor bad the neither good nor bad’. Only if the radical position is actually impossible will the impasse be real.

¹⁸ Theoretically, of course, there could be some further candidate for ‘friend’ not yet considered, i.e. apart from the loved, the loving, the like, etc. (E3–5); but then we should still need to ask what happened to the first of the two alternative options Socrates offered the two boys in 222C.

¹⁹ ‘And I said, wanting to take a look at the *logos* . . .’, B3.

Perhaps the very fact that Socrates does not suggest to Lysis and Menexenus that they go back to that position – that he does not point out to them the equivalence of ‘the good belongs to everyone’ and ‘everyone desires the good’ – is itself to be taken as implying that the radical position is impossible. Perhaps we are meant to suppose that, after all, the whole argument has turned out to be a wild-goose chase. But that hardly looks a plausible reading. Given that Socrates has spent so much time arguing for the destination actually reached by 222A; given that, in retrospect, what that destination involves was already behind the first part of that argument (in the shape not just of that purple passage at 210A–C, but of the playful use of the premiss that happiness is a matter of doing ‘what one wants’); given also that he gives us no reason why he should have rowed back from that destination: given all these things, it seems in the highest degree implausible that any rowing back is supposed to have taken place. If we want Socrates to go back on his argument and its conclusion, it will be just because we think it (obviously) false. If Socrates, and Plato, had thought it simply false, why would they have wasted so much time on it, and what is more, with no clear indication that it is simply to be ‘discarded’? If Lysis and Menexenus give up on the argument at the last moment, as in effect they do, that is both intelligible and forgivable. But what the two boys do is unlikely in any case to be meant to be decisive for us. Much more likely, we are being challenged to abandon our presuppositions, in a way that the two boys show themselves finally unable to do. And in any case we surely *know* where Socrates stands, by virtue of that passage at 210A–C, and everything that follows, down to the reappearance of *to oikeion*, ‘belonging’, in 221E: what ‘belongs’ to us, what is ‘ours’, is only what benefits us. We, the readers, are invited to accept that what each and every one of us desires, whenever we desire, is what by nature belongs to us, our true good; if only we had a better idea of what that was. *This* is the final pay-off from the argument. Radical it may be, even false (though we, Penner and Rowe, think not). But merely asserting it to be false will hardly be enough, in light of the fact that Socrates has presented an argument for it.

But, significantly, we are not told that it is true, either; there is no suggestion that the boys are simply wrong to have responded in the way they do. Socrates’ comparison of himself with those ‘wise’ people, the expert lawyers, in the context (222E2–3) serves to underline the distance between the kind of ‘expert’ he is and expertise as it would normally be understood. His failure to contradict his young interlocutors is not to be taken as either disingenuous or mischievous. When he says ‘maybe you’re right, but if you are I don’t know where to go from here’, he is giving *them* the opportunity

to reconsider. He cannot do it for them. The problem has arisen because of their own inability quite to put everything together (as shown by their choice in 222C–D – ‘different things belong to different people’), and they are the only ones who can ultimately do anything about that. We the readers, on the other hand, have the advantage that we can go back over the dialogue, as many times as we want, instead of needing to give instant answers to Socrates’ questions. And the complexity of the *Lysis* is such that it certainly requires such re-reading.

A number of other dialogues – e.g. *Euthyphro*, *Charmides*, *Laches* – formally end, as the *Lysis* does, in *aporia*, i.e. in impasse. That is, it is a recurring feature of Plato’s writing to indicate a positive conclusion and then, at least apparently, to back off from it, so leaving the reader more or less uncertain where he or she is supposed to be. That, at any rate, is the effect that such ‘aporetic’ endings have on many modern readers. Not unnaturally, such readers tend to conclude that their condition is the one Plato means them to be in. They then go on to connect his purpose in so treating them with a particular idea, regularly advocated by the character Socrates, in various dialogues, of what it is to do philosophy: as something that each of us has to work at for ourselves, but at the same time a process that will usually need to be carried on in dialogue with others.²⁰ Socrates’ unwillingness to dictate to his philosophical interlocutors is, on this account, the counterpart of the refusal of a properly philosophical dialogue to dictate to its readers: a refusal that would be taken to its extreme in any genuinely aporetic dialogue, that is, in any dialogue that was designed to leave its readers genuinely to make up their own minds, *with no indication of which way the author might prefer them to go*. To ask whether there actually is any such dialogue at all in the Platonic corpus is beyond the scope of the present book. What is absolutely clear, however, is that if there is, it is not the *Lysis*.

Let us be clear about what we are denying. What we are denying is that, at the end of the *Lysis* (whatever may be true of any other dialogues), Plato is telling us, his readers, through Socrates: ‘Well, as you can see, the discussion has failed; so now it’s up to you to think about the issues for yourselves – see how you can do, now that I (Plato) have given you an example of the general way to go about doing philosophy, shown you how exciting it is,’ and so forth. The end of the *Lysis*, we are saying, is not in the least like that. By the time we reach 222B2, Socrates has developed a position from which he then gives us no reason at all to back off, and from which *he* actually only

²⁰ The classic, and most explicit, statement of the view in question occurs in the *Phaedrus*, allied to a thorough-going critique of the medium of writing: see especially (*Phaedrus*) 274B ff.

backs off to the extent that he says ‘Well, if you take *your* view, I don’t know what to say.’ Which is no backing off. It is rather a direct challenge to us, to decide between a view that has been argued for – his – and one that has not been so argued for – the boys’. The impasse is only apparent – except, of course, for anyone who just finds the position developed an untenable one.²¹ If only Lysis and Menexenus had thought – been able to think – more clearly at 222C–D, then things would have been different.²² ‘If none of [the foregoing things] is friend,’ says Socrates finally at 222E6–7, ‘I no longer have any idea what to say.’ But there is nothing whatever, in the end-game of the *Lysis*, to rule out *one* of those things from being ‘friend’ – namely what ‘belongs’, the *oikeion*, understood as the good; or perhaps better, the whole complex analysis of *philia* that preceded the supposed *bouleversement* in 222C–D. Is it perhaps the main function of 223AI–2 (‘When I’d said that, I had it in mind at that point to disturb some other member of the older set’) to hint, ironically, to the reader: ‘But you can do better, since you’re older than the two boys?’²³

As a matter of fact, our view is that there is no Platonic dialogue that is ‘genuinely aporetic’ in the way specified. We suppose that Plato’s general aim, when writing in ‘aporetic’ mode, is that we come to see for ourselves the kinds of ideas that *he* wishes, at the time, to promote, and to have us adopt, absent any decisive arguments for our not adopting them. The ideas in question may not yet be fully formed in his own mind; they may indeed still be in process of development – a possibility that would fit well with the general picture his Socrates presents of philosophy, as perhaps always and inevitably a matter of work in progress.²⁴ Since, however, we have no space here to justify that view, we restrict ourselves to the claim that this is the kind of dialogue that the *Lysis* is.

²¹ But that is no impasse either: there will be a way forward for such a person, even if it consists in going back over the arguments.

²² On the importance, for Socrates, of the need for us to understand things for ourselves (and why there is no ‘failure of love’ here, as alleged by Vlastos), see Penner 1992, §VI.

²³ The ‘some other’ here hints at a rueful admission that at his age he really ought to have been able to do better than he has. That is mere play, for we have known since 209A–C that Socrates sees no connection between wisdom and mere age. This time, however, Socrates is not playing with Menexenus and Lysis, since the sentence in question is addressed to whoever is listening to his report of his conversation in the wrestling-school, not to the boys themselves. So, yes, he would have continued the conversation with someone else, with more sense than he has – no fool worse than an old fool! But it is also, quite obviously, part of Plato’s purpose that *his* audience should be ‘disturbed’, ‘moved’ – the verb is *kinein* – to talk/think for themselves about what has transpired in the dialogue.

²⁴ See especially that passage in the *Phaedrus* referred to in n. 20 above.

CHAPTER 8

223AI–B8: the dialogue ends – people will say that Socrates and the boys think they are friends, but that they haven't been able to discover what 'the friend' is

The dialogue ends with a concrete illustration of the theme of the first conversation between Socrates and Lysis in 207–10 – about the way Lysis' parents refuse to allow him to do what he wants, even handing him over to a slave for the slave to do whatever *he* wants with him. The slave-guardian in charge of him (see 208c) comes to get him (and Menexenus' to get him), so cutting the conversation short. But this, given the content of the conversation, begins to look like a genuine case of stopping him from doing what he wants, insofar as it brings to an end an opportunity to philosophize (to express his own *philosophia*, his 'love of wisdom': 213D), that activity which alone promises to get him the wisdom that he and everyone else desires. And these guardians are the very ones whose job it is to take the boys to the teacher's (208c again):

223AI When I'd said that, I had it in mind at that point (*ēdē*) to disturb some other member of the older set; and then the guardians came up, like gods of some sort, Menexenus' and Lysis' guardians, with the boys' brothers with them, and called out to tell them to leave **223A5** for home (for by now it was late). Now at first both we and the people standing around tried to fend them off; but when they took no notice of us, addressed us angrily in broken Greek and **223B1** went on calling the boys just the same, and what's more¹ looked to us difficult to engage with² having had a bit to drink at the Hermaea festival – well, we gave in to them and broke up our get-together (*tēn sunousian*). (223AI–B3)

The presence of Lysis' and Menexenus' brothers perhaps provides the link to their parents, who were the focus in 207–10. In any case it is not just a matter of ignorant slaves breaking things up; the free-born brothers are implicated too. Slaves and brothers together represent yet another, lower level of incomprehension in relation to the philosophical action that has

¹ Reading *hama d'* for *alla* (a suggestion owed immediately to David Robinson, though he does not claim it as his own invention).

² A military expression: Socrates is jokingly suggesting that they might have tried to fight the slaves off.

been going on, i.e. lower even than Hippothales'. Or perhaps two more levels: neither slaves nor brothers were there to hear the conversation, and so don't know what they're interrupting, but the slaves also seem to have been drinking, so that they would probably be incapable of understanding what has been going on even if someone told them (does their 'broken Greek' also suggest a linguistic problem?).³ But at the same time it will of course suit Plato's own purposes to bring the dialogue to an end just about here, if (as we suggested in Chapter 7 above) part of his point is that Socrates cannot in the end *give* the boys – or us – the answers.

Of course the slaves and the brothers are doing no more than fulfilling the parents' instructions; it *is* late. Despite that, Socrates suggests, he and the others tried to hold them off, and might even have tried using physical force, so keen were they to carry on. But in the end they caved in. Socrates' excuse, a pair of tipsy slaves cursing in bad Greek, hardly looks convincing, and is surely not meant to convince us. What underlies the joke is just the sense that there is unfinished business, a point underlined by Socrates' parting shot:

But all the same⁴ I did get in, even as they were in the process of leaving, 'Now just look at us, Lysis and Menexenus! We've made 223B5 ourselves ridiculous, I, an old man, and you too. For these people here⁵ will say as they leave that we think that we're friends (*philoī*) of one another – for I count myself too as one of you⁶ – but haven't yet been able to find out what the friend (*ho philos*)⁷ is.' (223B3–8)

This 'I count myself too as one of you' is just the sort of affectionate thing an 'old man' might say to two adolescent boys with whom he has had a good conversation. But there is rather more to it than that – certainly if, as we proposed in Chapter 6, Socrates is the best candidate available for the

³ That they have been drinking rather than talking has a certain resonance in itself, under the circumstances: so e.g. at 212D wine-loving and wisdom-loving were put side by side – and according to 222C1–2 philosophy itself can make a person light in the head ('since we're intoxicated with our argument . . .'). (They have been drinking 'at the Hermaea festival': the Greek here, *en tois Hermaiois*, may just possibly contain a pun, given that a *hermaion* is a piece of good luck, like a large-denomination banknote found in the street. Have the slaves been drinking even while the others have been in the midst of a series of 'lucky' finds?)

⁴ I.e. the conversation was over, but I did manage (despite the guardians) one last intervention.

⁵ I.e. the people standing round (A6), not the slaves and Lysis' and Menexenus' brothers, who didn't hear the discussion.

⁶ I.e., presumably, one of them insofar as they are thinking of themselves as friends of one another (for Lysis and Menexenus as thinking of themselves as friends, see most recently 221E5–222AI).

⁷ The expression *ho philos* here seems to be the personal/masculine equivalent of *to philon*, as at 220A6, 218B7, 216C2 (i.e. representing the whole complex of factors involved in *philia*); what Socrates is saying is, then, more than that they haven't been able to find out – so the others will say – what a friend is, though it will include that.

role of the ‘genuine lover’ of 222A5–6.⁸ He does not and cannot explicitly claim to be that, and indeed he only admits to *counting* himself in with Lysis and Menexenus, *thinking* he is friend to them just as much as they think they are friends to each other.⁹ But on our analysis, the very fact of Socrates’ reminding them that he and they have not finished what they started will be evidence that what he thinks is true; that is, if friendship for, loving, someone involves wanting them to be wise (see Chapter 6 above).

What ‘these people here will say as they leave’ – ‘that we . . . haven’t yet been able to find out what sort of thing the friend *is*’ – is true in a way, but also false in a way. It is false insofar as the outcomes of the preceding argument, to 222A7, actually still stand (Lysis and Menexenus had no justification for veering off, at 222C7–D1, and they gave none). Those outcomes, by this stage, hardly need repeating. It is the neither-good-nor-bad – the ignorant, but not terminally so – that is ‘friend’, *philon*, of the good (wisdom/the wise life?), and that in turn is what naturally ‘belongs’ to the *philos* subject; as for what causes ‘friendship’, that is desire for the good, which is always accompanied by but is not caused by lack (a state in which every desiring subject finds him-/herself insofar as he/she is not ‘good’, and not ‘bad’ either). And this account will be true of *every* case of *philia*, i.e. of loving and desiring. This last point is the one that Lysis and Menexenus baulk at, as we ourselves may baulk. (But again the challenge faces us: if we do, we are faced with the question of what to do with the preceding argument; where then did it go wrong?)

On the other hand, even if the two boys had agreed on that last point, it would in a way also be true that Socrates and they ‘haven’t yet been able to find out what sort of thing the friend *is*’, insofar as they would

⁸ Is he a *lover*, though – an *erastes* (the true version contrasting with the ‘pretended’ one, i.e. Hippothales)? Specifically, can he really be Lysis’ lover? We see no reason why he should not be, i.e. why he should not be ‘in love with’ Lysis. There is no indication, for sure, that it has crossed his mind that he might like to sleep with him, or (more importantly) that if it had, he would ever act on it; and maybe wanting a sexual relationship would be a normal part of *eran*, as much as it is of what we call in English ‘being in love’. But being in love *need* not involve wanting sex, and even if all Greek lovers in fact wanted sex, there is no reason to suppose that Socrates would have supposed sex an inevitable part of *eran*; passionate (romantic?) relationships that go beyond mere friendship are possible even without physical sex, even without a desire for it that is not acted on. There is, to be sure, none of that erotic *frisson* that animates those other two Platonic dialogues on love and desire, the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*. But there is no aspect of Socrates’ behaviour in *Symposium* or *Phaedrus* which would be out of tune with what he has to say about – genuine – erotic passion in the *Lysis*. We should not forget, either, that erotic love is the theme with which the *Lysis* begins, and to which it returns (in 222) – nor that Socrates starts off by claiming some sort of expertise in erotics (204B8–C2; cf. 206C1 ff.). Its focus just turns out to be on explaining desire in general, rather than on the species of desire.

⁹ Though not necessarily on the same grounds – unless the boys have completely followed his argument, which we have found reason to think they have not.

still have needed to discover the detailed specifications of that thing that we truly desire, of what is truly our ‘friend’ and naturally ‘belongs’ to us. What exactly will the content of the looked-for knowledge be? What will the good (knowledgeable) life consist in? They would have succeeded in ‘finding out’ something both about what it is not (money, power and all the usual things counted as ‘friends?’), and about what it is, or includes (wisdom, lovers/friends/darlings who will contribute to the search for it . . .), but that would self-evidently leave them still short of their goal. They would, in fact, be much in that sort of situation in which the Socrates of the *Apology* claims to be, of being ‘wise’ to the extent of being aware of his own ignorance, while actually knowing nothing of substance.¹⁰ In that sense, impasse or *aporia* looks a reasonable outcome for the *Lysis* as a whole, as it is for at least some other Platonic dialogues. But clearly, given the theory that the dialogue has turned out to sponsor, that will already, in itself, give us a programme for life: the very programme that the *Apology* too advocates. How could we not, each of us, concern ourselves with finding out what it is that truly answers to our desires?

¹⁰ Cf. Chapter 5, §2(a) above.

CHAPTER 9

203AI–207B7 revisited

We have already made considerable use of the opening pages of the dialogue in analysing the rest: enough use, in fact, to make it unnecessary to provide any further justification for treating them as organically related to those other parts. Just because 203A–207B appears devoid of *philosophical* content, or at any rate of philosophical argument, a reader might be inclined to treat it merely as a kind of dramatic introduction, attractive in its own way but, in the end, dispensable, so that one could begin reading at 207B8 without losing anything essential. However our analysis has shown that the passage not only looks forward (introduces us), in a variety of ways, to the following conversation between the three protagonists, but is actually of a piece with it. The present short chapter, in which we revisit 203A–207B, is designed mainly to confirm and deepen that point.

What most of all ties this opening passage, 203AI–207B7, to the main part of the dialogue is the way the conclusion of that main part, at 222A6–7, is addressed (as it were) to Hippothales. We have suggested more than once that the whole of 207B–222A by this simple device becomes the promised demonstration to Hippothales of ‘the things a lover should say about a beloved to him or to others’ (205AI–2). Originally it seemed as if the demonstration extended only as far as Socrates’ humbling of Lysis and the supposed demolition of his claim that his parents love him, in 207D–210D. But by the time we have got to 222A, the possible range of ‘what a lover should say about a beloved’ has vastly expanded, so that we are talking, yes, about lovers and beloveds, but also about all kinds of love and desire, and all sorts of objects of love and desire. So when, finally, we are told about a beloved that he must – necessarily – love a genuine lover, we have both moved beyond the case of the lover of young boys, and simultaneously stayed with it: the latter insofar as the lesson that applies to all lovers and beloveds (as now better understood) will also, and importantly, apply to the ordinary

lover like Hippothales. In short, he needs to change, and no longer to be that ordinary lover.¹

This is of considerable importance, for it allows us to understand the structure of the *Lysis* as starting from, and in a way centred on, a comparison between two different versions of passionate lover, and of passionate love (i.e. *erōs*). It would be natural to suppose, not least because of the subtitle of the dialogue, 'About Friendship' (*Peri philias*), that there is a change of subject between 204–10 (Socrates and Hippothales, the lover; Socrates and Lysis, the beloved) and the rest: some banter about *erōs*, we might think, gradually changes into a discussion of *philia*. By now the analysis has shown clearly enough that the dialogue makes no such sharp distinction between *erōs* and *philia*: Socrates proposes to give the same account of both, i.e. insofar as what he does is to offer us a theory of *desire*, of which *erōs* and *philia* are species (though the term *philia* and its cognates are frequently, if not typically, treated throughout the dialogue as covering desire as a whole). Nevertheless, there might still be a temptation to treat the earlier parts, about *erōs*, as somehow preliminary, and tangential. However the reappearance of Hippothales in 222A, and the framing of the main conclusion there in terms of the erotic lover and his darling, makes this approach distinctly less attractive. It is certainly still, at bottom, an exploration of the nature of desire. But the fact that the results of that exploration are expressed in terms of, and applied to, *erōs* in particular, and what is more, in a way that evokes the particular example of *erōs* that has been lurking among the onlookers all along, means that the dialogue might with as much justification have been subtitled *Peri erōtos* as *Peri philias*. 'This is the way one should behave towards a loved one, Hippothales, not *that way*' – because to do it your way is to misunderstand the nature of desire and its object.

This may seem not to get the balance of the *Lysis* quite right, for after all no one can help noticing the frequency with which Socrates recurs in the dialogue to father/son or parent/son relationships. These, indeed, figure rather more frequently than do erotic relationships. But the latter could scarcely be helpfully discussed with a presumably innocent adolescent boy, and especially not when the occasion for starting the conversation with him is a lover's passion which he is evidently rather less ready to talk about than the lover (we assume Lysis *knows* about it; how could he not, under the circumstances?). This much is surely true: that if the dialogue as a whole is about changing our perceptions about desire, and about ourselves as

¹ 'The things a lover should say about a beloved *to him or to others*' (205AI–2): 207–10 (and, in a way, 222A6–7) will be 'to him', the rest 'to others'?

desiring beings, the lesson is applied *first* to the case of erotic desire. But in the process, the lover, the *erastes*, through his transformation into the ‘genuine’ lover of 222A, also becomes a model for other sorts of interpersonal relationships.²

So this is the real focus of the *Lysis*: the contrast between two types of lover, as represented by Hippothales, on the one hand, and his ‘genuine’ counterpart on the other – as we suppose, Socrates. Given the role of knowledge and wisdom in ‘genuine’ love, it is presumably not accidental that the larger part of 203–7 focuses on and around Hippothales’ lack of both. He writes bad prose, even worse poetry, has a terrible singing voice (Ctesippus at 204D), talks a lot of outdated stuff about ancestors and victories at games (Ctesippus again, at 205C–D), writes encomia to himself, therein showing that he counts his chickens before they hatch (Socrates at 205D–206A), and makes his quarry more rather than less difficult to catch by his poetry, so showing himself a bad poet because he causes damage to himself by it (Socrates at 206A–B).³ So, clearly, Hippothales is in desperate need of advice, for which he turns to Socrates: ‘. . . these are just the reasons, Socrates, that I’m telling you everything: if you’ve something else up your sleeve, give your advice about the line a person should take in conversation, or what he should do, to become an object of love for a beloved’ (206B9–c3). Socrates, after all, has hinted – in what is by now a familiar moment in the dialogue – that he is an expert judge in such cases: ‘come on, give me just the displays you give these people here, so that I can establish whether you know the things a lover should say about a beloved to him or to others’ (204E10–205A2). Quite where he gets that expertise from, if he is as ‘useless’ as he says (204C1), but Hippothales doesn’t doubt that he has it,⁴ and the sequel will show that indeed he does. The contrast between Hippothales’ uselessness and the ‘useless’ Socrates’ competence could hardly be made any plainer; all that needs to be supplied is Socrates’ own role as a different kind of lover, *erastes*, of the young – a role in which he is openly on display throughout the bulk of the dialogue.⁵

To dwell too long on the detail of 203–7 – the ‘introduction’ – is to run the danger of being heavy-handed, and of spoiling a passage remarkable for

² All of this will situate the *Lysis* strikingly close to the *Symposium*, in theme and in emphasis: see Epilogue.

³ On the meaning and implications of 206B5–9 see Chapter 1, n. 25 above, the detail of which need not be repeated here.

⁴ Is that because he knows Socrates as a good talker, good at ‘conversation’ (*dialegesthai*)? See 206C2 with Chapter 1, n. 27 above.

⁵ This is not to suggest that Socrates is also *erastes* (even of an ideal type) to Menexenus; the question is who should be *Lysis*’ lover.

its lightness and humour (whatever degree of seriousness is hiding beneath). But we may be allowed to mention one other theme in the passage to which later developments are likely to give a new significance: the theme of the *identity* of the loved one. Socrates starts it off, by asking Hippothales ‘what I’ll be going in [sc. into the wrestling-school] *for*, and who the beauty (*ho kalos*) is’. ‘One of us thinks it’s one person’, comes the reply, ‘another another’. ‘But who do *you* think it is, Hippothales?’ (204BI–5). Gradually it emerges that he’s in love with Lysis, but even then Socrates allows him the option of denying that it’s Lysis (‘Are you denying . . . even that you’re in love with the one “this person” says?’, 205A4); and after all that we find Socrates suggesting, in 205D–206A, that his encomia are really aimed at himself rather than at Lysis. Thus the dialogue begins as it ends, with uncertainty about the object of love; and with Hippothales adopting what is, *mutatis mutandis*, the same sort of position that Lysis and Menexenus finally take up: that different people find different objects beautiful (and loveable). Of course, Hippothales thinks he is clear about his own choice. But in fact, as the main body of the dialogue will show, he has no idea of what it is that he *really* loves. He is a good deal further from the answer to that question than either of the boys; and certainly further away from it than Lysis. Lysis at any rate knows it has *something* to do with knowledge, even though he does not see quite how to fit everything together, and so, like Menexenus, loses the plot at the final moment (there in 222C–D), having failed quite to fit together knowledge, the good and *what ‘belongs’ to us* in the way that Socrates surely intends.

PART II

The theory of the Lysis

CHAPTER 10

A re-reading of the Lysis: some preliminaries

I SOME METHODOLOGICAL PROLEGOMENA; AND A MAJOR OBJECTION FROM PROPONENTS OF THE 'ANALYTICAL-ELENCTIC' APPROACH

In this second part of the book, we propose a second trip through the *Lysis* – this time with some philosophically more adventurous, and so more controversial, explanations (which will also be more pointed and more single focus) of the course of its argument as a whole. These explanations are more adventurous, first, by virtue of the extent to which they elaborate on *what the claims are* that we¹ regard as clear enough allusions, *in the text of the Lysis*, to Socratic claims² made explicitly only in other dialogues of

¹ Throughout this chapter and the two that follow, 'we' stands for Penner and Rowe, unless otherwise indicated. Rowe came later to some of the philosophical views that will be recommended, and indeed in a number of cases came to them only after long resistance. To that extent Rowe's title to the ownership of such views is less clear than is Penner's; but in no case where 'we' claim to believe something is Rowe anything less, now, than a willing participant in the claim.

² To be clear, when we appear to be distinguishing *Socratic* claims from *Platonic* claims, we *often are not doing so*. In fact we regard *fundamental* Socratic and Platonic positions as nearly identical save on one point – and on the implications of that one point (which may, however, be fairly extensive; see §4 below). Socrates – the historical Socrates as Penner thinks, the Socrates of a certain fairly well-marked part of Plato's stylistically early dialogues as Rowe is inclined to think, though he is close to moving to Penner's view – is fundamentally at odds with Plato on the implications of only one question: a question about psychology of action. This is the question whether it is possible for any actions in that standard group of actions which Aristotle would later call 'voluntary actions' to be the direct result merely of irrational desires taken together with certain beliefs. In the Platonic 'parts of the soul' doctrine, actions of the sort Aristotle – though as we shall see (§4 below), not Plato – would call 'voluntary' or 'willing' can be brought about by brute or nearly-brute irrational desires, in accordance with the following sort of desire/belief explanation-schema:

I am thirsty (= I desire some water);
I believe there is water to be drunk from this glass here;
So
I take the glass and drink from it.

(See Aristotle, e.g. *Nicomachean Ethics* vii (= *Eudemian Ethics* vi).3; Plato, e.g. *Republic* iv, 435c–439d.) For Socrates, by contrast, no such explanation-schema is ever applicable to what Aristotle would call a voluntary action. On the contrary, for Socrates, the only desire that can ever function as

Plato – as explicitly, at any rate, as Plato's Socrates ever claims anything. Then, beyond that, in a second degree of adventurousness, we also make use of other Socratic claims – claims *not* alluded to in the *Lysis*, though required in order to see just how we are to take those claims that *are* alluded to.³ What this gives us is an entire web of interlocking claims about knowledge, desire, love and the good. All of these claims – we propose – are involved in the argument of the dialogue, and if we are fully to understand

the desire-half of a desire/belief explanation-schema is desire for a single ultimate good consisting in the agent's own maximum available happiness (which we take to be the maximum available good), given those circumstances of the agent's present life from which the agent now begins. (More detail on Socrates vs Plato on the psychology of action in §4 below.)

³ A word of clarification may be desirable concerning our talk of 'claims' Socrates and his interlocutors make. We engage in such talk because of our reluctance to go along with the usual way in which analytical philosophers identify what Socrates and his interlocutors are saying – in terms of the *propositions* they assert. Perhaps we might agree that a Socratic argument is a matter of Socrates' examining *what his interlocutors are saying* in using a given sentence. But most analytical philosophers engaging in analysis of Socratic arguments go on to identify what an *interlocutor* (including Socrates) is saying (in using a given sentence) with what the *sentence* in question says; and they identify what the *sentence* says (once due allowance has been made for indexicals and ambiguities) with the *proposition* expressed by the sentence (no matter who the interlocutor may be). The proposition expressed by the sentence is in turn identified with what Ryle 1945 calls the sentence's 'logical powers' – though the idea goes back to Frege 1879: 2–3. Briefly, but we hope adequately for our purposes, we may say that – according to the view in question – two sentences, e.g.

a. Piety is what is loved by the gods (*Euthyphro* 7A ff.)

and

b. Piety is what is loved by such beings as Zeus

differ in logical powers, because neither sentence can be inferred from the other by purely logical laws (or even – for those who believe in meanings – from logical laws plus a rule allowing substitution of synonym for synonym). A further premiss is needed if we are to get either from the other, namely 'The gods are such beings as Zeus.' Such a construal of what Euthyphro might be saying by means of such sentences as (a) and (b) would of course facilitate the examination of Socrates' arguments, since they could then be put into propositional logic and first-order quantificational logic and then deftly examined by contemporary standards (which is of course just what tends to happen when analytical philosophers take to examining Socratic arguments). We reject this account of what Socrates and his interlocutors are saying because of the excessively narrow (and ultimately falsifying) account of the identity of what someone is saying. By contrast, in the example we have just given, we maintain that what Euthyphro is saying by means of sentence (a) using the expression 'the gods', he could just as easily have said by means of sentence (b) using the expression 'such beings as Zeus'. For what an interlocutor claims, we think, is (in the simplest sorts of cases) a matter of what they 'have in mind' to refer to (what they intend to refer to), and, in addition, of what they intend to say about the object they have in mind or intend to refer to. 'What they intend to refer to' involves everything they believe about that object no matter how expressed – and perhaps rather more (if they think that the thing they have in mind to talk about must inevitably have properties they don't know about, and even properties that actually contradict things they believe about the object: but we leave this further matter aside till we come to – what we are calling – the 'principle of real reference', in §2 below). So if what Euthyphro *has in mind* to refer to, or *intends* to refer to, when he uses the words 'the gods' *is* such beings as Zeus, we have our point. Whatever other speakers might have in mind – and whatever the logical powers doctrine may tell us – we hold that when Euthyphro uses the words 'the gods' in (a), *he* has in mind to refer to, and *intends* to refer to, such beings as Zeus.

that argument, we need to take cognizance of all of them. It is true that the *Lysis* itself presents just one perspective on this complex web, placing some of its aspects (claims, beliefs) more to the fore, others more in the background. Other perspectives on this same web of belief will show up in other dialogues, depending on the differing focuses of attention in those dialogues. But, to repeat the essential point, as we see it *all* the Socratic claims in question – and all the aspects of his doctrines that are explicit only elsewhere, even aspects well in the background here⁴ – are involved in one way or other in the *Lysis*.⁵ Third, we believe that a correct judgement on what claims Socrates employs as (what we call) premisses of his arguments requires correct judgement as to whether the claims in question are true or false,⁶ as well as a (sufficiently) correct view of what those things and

⁴ To make this a little clearer, we take it that when an aspect of something *x* (courage, knowledge, the gods, Jocasta) is presented, Socrates' attention is not curtained off from *x* in such a way as to exclude attention to unnoticed aspects of *x*, or even attention to *x* itself. (Contrast, in the example in the preceding note, the aspect of the gods which introduces them as 'the gods' and the aspect which introduces them as 'such beings as Zeus'. Thus while these two expressions have the same reference, they present that reference from two different aspects.) It will turn out that, for those who believe in them, propositions and meanings are certain sorts of standard aspects. (For such people, 'the gods' and 'such beings as Zeus', even if they refer to the same thing, have different meanings, and make for different propositions when combined with 'Piety is what is loved by . . .'. We of course insist, on the contrary, that Euthyphro's claim that piety is what is loved by the gods *is* his claim that piety is what is loved by such beings as Zeus.)

⁵ Our appeal to Socratic claims in other dialogues is in apparent violation of the maxim that one should try to understand a single Socratic dialogue entirely on its own terms and without aid from claims seemingly endorsed by Socrates in other dialogues (Gill 2002). No doubt that is a reasonable starting-point for interpreting a Socratic dialogue. But perhaps our view is not strictly inconsistent with the maxim in question. After all, the allusions that occur within the dialogue (at what we have called our first stage of adventurousness) *do* occur within the dialogue. Does the maxim say we must ignore the fact that an allusion is made *within* the dialogue? Does it say we must not ask whether Socrates (or Plato) *intends* us, *within* the dialogue, to consider the doctrine alluded to, in accordance with how he would want us to understand that doctrine further – for example, in the way the doctrine is understood in other Socratic passages? Does it say we are not to try to understand the allusion in a Socratic way – even if to understand what that is, we need to look to other dialogues? It is true that we do not endorse all of Gill's claims (for example, about the recollection passages in the *Meno* and the *Phaedo*). But we spend so much time here on Gill's maxim because we find ourselves in sympathy with his general animus against what he calls 'cross-dialogue' interpretations. There is a real temptation for analytical philosophers to atomize dialogues into 'arguments' or 'elenchi', then to atomize the arguments and 'elenchi' into *propositions* – these propositions then being taken to represent doctrines, those doctrines then being found in other arguments in other dialogues; in all of this ignoring how one bit in one dialogue needs to be understood in terms of another bit of the same dialogue. The crucial objection to cross-dialogue interpretations, we think, is that they abandon too soon the effort to understand one 'argument' or 'elenchus' in a dialogue in terms of what the dialogue as a whole is trying to do. We hope we have not done that. If we observe this caution, we see no defect to the present treatment of allusions to other dialogues that occur within the *Lysis*. In sum, we don't see that any of the moves we propose to make here are excluded by Gill's maxim.

⁶ This is not the case with propositions, as will be clearer from the 'analytical-elenctic' objection to our procedure which we consider immediately below. (Part of the idea of the proposition is that central

attributes are (if any) in the real world which the claims single out.⁷ (And, by the way, we accept the implication that all accounts of just what claims are being made, our own account included, must therefore remain tentative.) What is more, in a fourth degree of adventurousness which we recognize many will find frankly extraordinary, we shall argue that most if not all of these claims are actually *true* – and that they are broadly defensible. We argue this without in the slightest implying that we – or even Socrates or Plato – has any kind of full grasp on what the whole truth is about any such claims. It is one thing to believe something firmly, quite another to claim to know it.⁸

Now we are well aware that these exegetical methods put us on a collision course with the practice and impulses of those of our colleagues who approach the study of Plato by way of analytical philosophy.⁹ Perhaps their opposition to our approach may be crystallized in the following kind of

idea of logic from the time of Aristotle to the present that has it that sentences *say the same thing* whether they are true or false, and regardless of what the reference is of terms occurring in them.) Our contrasting position – on the need to know what the reference is of terms referred to by the sentence used if we are to know *what is being said* by means of that sentence – is indicated in n. 3 above. (Incidentally, it should be clear that these considerations concerning the identity of *what is said* will apply to many analytical philosophers who eschew the word ‘proposition’. If it is taken that ‘Piety is what is loved by such beings as Zeus’ says something different from ‘Piety is what is loved by the gods,’ on the grounds that an extra premiss is needed to get one from the other, our objection remains whether or not the word ‘proposition’ is used. The issue is solely the issue of the identity criteria of *what someone is saying*, whatever word we use to bring out the relevant identity conditions.)

⁷ Suppose, in the simple case, that Euthyphro is using a sentence to attribute some property to some particular object picked out with the referring expression ‘the gods’. Then we shall take it that if, on another occasion, Euthyphro is attributing the same property to some particular object picked out by the referring expression ‘such beings as Zeus’, then he is *saying the same thing* on both occasions. This simple case allows us to reduce the harder question of *what someone is saying by means of a given sentence* to the easier question *what someone is referring to by means of a given referring expression*. (It parallels the way in which Frege and his followers reduce the harder question of the reference of a *sentence* to the easier question of the reference of a *referring expression*.)

⁸ Nor do we think it will help to resort to talk of *partial knowledge* of this truth about any such claims, or – what comes to the same thing – knowledge of a part of this truth. (We do not see any other way of making sense of the idea of partial knowledge.) For without the whole truth, any restricted or retrenched claim bids fair to come into conflict with unknown parts of the whole truth that do not show up in the more restricted claim. (Of course, the positing of propositions is a standard way of attempting to generate entities of which one *can* have knowledge.)

⁹ We acknowledge that we ourselves came to the interpretation of Plato from the tradition of analytical philosophy, and indeed that we believe that a very great deal of the best work on the philosophy of Plato done in the past half-century came from analytical philosophers – beginning with Vlastos, but followed by several generations of extremely able workers in the same tradition, such as Santas, Irwin and Kraut (to name just three). This has come about in part because of an entirely laudable willingness (which we ourselves heartily endorse) to engage with Plato by making his arguments confront modern assumptions in terms of which it is natural to try to understand those arguments. (See Penner 1987: xiv–xvi, on why this attempt is a necessary feature of good interpretation.)

objection (which we shall call ‘AN-ELENCH’ as representing what we shall be calling the ‘analytical–elenctic’ approach to the analysis of argument):

AN-ELENCH: ‘You two (Penner and Rowe) are surely going to end up playing fast and loose with the interpretation of the text if you start talking about things only explicit in passages outside the passage you are analysing. Why do you not restrict yourselves to what is *said* – and in the *explicit* premisses of the argument?’¹⁰ Why do you not restrict yourselves – certainly in the first instance – to the propositions actually expressed in the argument? Why not formulate explicit premisses and conclusion, and then (making due exception for inductive arguments, e.g. arguments from analogy) assess the argument for validity and soundness before turning to other passages to shed light on the passage in question? At that point, it *might* be appropriate – if it should prove absolutely necessary to our comprehension of the passage – to turn to propositions explicit only outside the passage. But surely you should be starting from the text of the actual argument before you, and assuming that it is meant to be self-sufficient – at any rate till such time as we despair of seeing how it *could* be self-sufficient. Stick to the text!

‘But we have another difficulty with what you say – this time going beyond mere questions of interpretation to more purely philosophical matters. Surely what you are proposing is going to take you very far from all logic and reason. Indeed, it is surely going to make logic impossible. Let us explain. You say that a correct judgement on what those sentences *say* which Socrates and his interlocutors employ as (what we call) premisses of his arguments requires correct judgement as to whether the sentences in question are true or false, as well as a (sufficiently) correct view of what the terms employed in that sentence refer to in the real world. Now surely this is a preposterous view of *what sentences say*. Surely we can know what a sentence says without knowing whether it is true or false? (Haven’t you two heard of such a thing as *knowing the truth-conditions* of a sentence?) Indeed, all logical reasoning would be impossible, unless we can know at least what a sentence *says* without knowing whether it is true or false. For the whole idea of logic is that we can sometimes *come* to know whether

¹⁰ The premisses here will probably be sentences. They will not be claims or beliefs, unless the claims or beliefs are identified with what the sentences say. (We have been careful in nn. 3, 6–8 above to make clear that we make no such identification.) On the *explicit*, see the remarks preparatory to the account of the so-called ‘Socratic Elenchus’ in Robinson 1953: 1, 3, 5. Few who remember their first reading of Robinson will deny the exhilaration they felt at the thought of Robinson’s breaking of exegetical windows, and the pouring in of fresh light on the issues. What we are suggesting, however, is that the time has come to repudiate Robinson’s approach, much though, through Vlastos and those who follow Vlastos on the ‘elenchus’, it has captured the field.

a given proposition is true or false only by first examining its relations to other propositions. For example, before one knows whether it is true or false that *p*, one may surely engage in some reasoning, and come to the view that *p*, *q* and *r* together entail *not-p* – or what indeed amounts to the same thing, some other contradiction (or logical inconsistency) – and consequently come to the view that at least one of these three propositions must be false. If one is also confident of the truth of *q* and *r*, one may then conclude that *p* is false. (And this is of course just what we say happens in standard uses of the Socratic *elenchus*.)¹¹ But now notice that this entire – surely unexceptionable – argument determining that *p* is false proceeded on the basis that the logic of this argument is exactly the same (or would have been exactly the same) if *p* is true (or had been true). In classical logic, our sentence-letters stand for the same proposition whether the sentence is true or false. What an asserted proposition *says* is that the truth-conditions *do* obtain in the world; and to deny that a proposition is true is to hold that *those same truth-conditions do not* obtain in the world. Whether what a sentence *says* is *true* – that is a matter of how things are in the world. But what the sentence *says* – the proposition it expresses – must be the same whether the sentence is true or false, since otherwise, we could not employ logic in hopes of discovering whether it is true or false. (In an important sense, what a sentence refers to or is primarily about is its truth-conditions. That way a sentence can be about the same thing whether it is true or false.)¹² That is a foundation-stone of classical logic, and indeed of analytical philosophy.¹³

¹¹ See Vlastos 1994: 11 ff., who, however, uses ‘standard’ only for cases where the explicit contradiction involved is ‘*p* and *not-p*’.

¹² Contrary to what we say in describing our third degree of adventurousness in the opening paragraph of this chapter. The analytical-elenctic approach to what a speaker is saying filters it, first, through the speaker’s sentence (due allowance being made for indexicals and ambiguities), then through antecedently stipulated truth-conditions – those being just another (semantical) version of what we have referred to in n. 3 above as the sentence’s ‘logical powers’. In this approach, *logic* becomes a theory of logical *language*. Logic is no longer about things and attributes, conjunctions, alternation, existence and so forth, but about interpretations given by us (antecedently) to names, predicates, the conjunction sign, the alternation sign, the existential quantifier and so forth. (We believe this is a variant of what Bergmann, Rorty, Davidson and Dummett refer to as ‘the linguistic turn’.) Of course a great many analytical philosophers will insist that what things and attributes, conjunction, alternation, existence are *given by* our interpretations of these symbols. That is, on this approach, what things and attributes are *reduces to* what our interpretations make of the appropriate symbols (cf. nn. 3, 10 above). On the other hand, surely neither Socrates nor Plato would have gone along with the idea that things and attributes are given by how we use names and predicates (as Socrates says to Critias in the *Charmides*, ‘As for me, I’ll allow you, so far as concerns names, to assign (*titheshtai*) each in whatever way you like; just point out (*deloun*) what it is that you’re applying whatever name it is to’: *Charmides* 163D5–7). Compare the discussion in §2 below of the real nature of cutting; and compare the complaint in Brouwer 1928 that Hilbert was confusing mathematics with metamathematics. On this point, and probably this point alone, Socrates and Plato would have been in agreement with Brouwer.

¹³ This foundation stone of analytical philosophy – that you must know the (antecedently stipulated) truth-conditions of a sentence before you can even raise the question of its truth-value, that before

If you two don't accept that point, you might as well give up systematic philosophy!'

This is a formidable objection. We wish we could reply to it in detail, beyond giving the kinds of hints we have given, or will give, in nn. 3–7, 9, 12–15 in the present chapter. Alas, our effort to do so began to take over far too much of the present treatment of the *Lysis*. We have decided that the best we can do in the circumstances is to try to make the difference between our approach and the usual one as clear as we can make it in brief compass. So for now we have just the following to say of the ‘analytical–elenctic’ objection. The objection makes the philosophical assumption that the best way to analyse an argument is to begin by doing it the honour of supposing that it is intended to be a logically valid, and sound, argument, consisting in propositions of the sort just characterized together with inferability relations (based on purely logical rules of inference alone) between such propositions. (Allowance is of course to be made if the argument involves inductive steps, e.g. arguments from analogy, as sometimes happens in Socratic argument. But on the ‘analytical–elenctic’ approach, these remain second-best arguments.)¹⁴ Ideally, then, one will attempt to formulate the argument in deductive form so as to assess it for validity and

you can even *look for* the answer to a question, you must know what the *question* is – is visible in perhaps its clearest form in the absolutely beautiful long opening paragraph of Frege 1918b, though it can also be found in Frege 1884: sec. 47 *ad finem*. Penner discusses this principle in detail (and rejects it) in ‘Platonic justice and what we mean by “Justice” = Unpub A, the main point of which article is briefly characterized in n. 23 below.

¹⁴ Hidden here is the idea – also elsewhere rejected by Penner: see his *Plato and the Philosophers of Language* (= Unpub b) – that there are two philosophically distinct ways of assessing the goodness of an argument, the first being the superior way, in terms of a deducibility relation that generates logical validity, the second being merely inductive or abductive or explanatory inference. (Indispensably connected with this dualism is the ‘logical powers’ doctrine of what sentences say.) Penner argues (*ibid.*) that this is an untenable dualism. Deduction, like proof, is not a way of attaining to knowledge. For there are no self-evident axioms or rules of inference, axioms and rules merely being postulated or laid down. And if not, then when one lays down axioms and rules, one does so, surely, on substantial (non-deductive, unproved) grounds that are as reasonable as one can find. If the issue, then, is how to argue for the truth of something, why is there a philosophical difference – a difference *in principle* – between

A. arguing for the truth of something by employing a deduction that appeals to ‘axioms’ or rules for which one has substantial (non-deductive, unproved) grounds that are as reasonable as one can find

and

B. arguing for the truth in question on substantial (non-deductive, unproved) abductive grounds that are as reasonable as one can find?

What could the grounds be for the deductive system being employed (or for the axioms postulated) but themselves substantial and explanatory? How then could there be a *philosophical* difference involved? Each attempt to argue for a position has to be assessed on its substantial (non-deductive, non-postulated) merits. (Here, some may concede that we do not come to know the theorems of an axiomatic system by means of proofs, but insist nevertheless, as Russell once did, that we do come to know this: that if the axioms and rules are correct, then the theorems are true. But this is an error.

soundness. Certain propositions are identified as premisses, and another proposition as the conclusion of that argument, which proposition is to follow from the others by means of purely logical rules of inference. The philosophical idea here is that the gold standard for interpreting certain sorts of philosophical arguments, especially those in Socratic dialectic, is rigorously deductive argument with explicit premisses, in accordance with the canons of first-order quantification-theory (and perhaps also the canons of some of its higher-order extensions) – the logic of *if . . . then . . . ; . . . or . . . ; . . . and . . . ; not . . . ; every; and some*, as elaborated in terms of now standard [metalinguistic] doctrines of validity, soundness, entailment, deductive inconsistency, semantic inconsistency¹⁵ and the like. And the idea

To suppose this would be to suppose that the axioms and rules of logic that justify the hypothetical claim *if the axioms then the theorems* are in better case than other axioms and rules. And there is no reason to think this is so – and many reasons for being rather more doubtful of these supposed axioms and rules than of many others, namely, the paradoxes.) We add here – what we have already suggested – that the absence of any absolute status for deductive truth also undercuts the ‘logical powers’ doctrine embodied in the theory of the proposition.

¹⁵ We take the (metalinguistic, or metalogical) distinction between deductive (proof theoretic, or syntactic) inconsistency and semantic inconsistency in the usual way. We also repudiate the idea that it is possible just to speak of validity in a more commonsense ‘baby logic’ way, as what obtains when, if the premisses are true, the conclusion *must* be true. For the modality of the word ‘must’ is the heart of the matter here, and needs to be explained; and we hazard the opinion that no one has made much progress without something like this metalinguistic machinery (bringing with it, we add, all the highly restrictive assumptions required, at almost every turn, to avoid paradox). Analytical philosophers should not delude themselves with the idea that they do not stand on the shoulders of Frege, Hilbert and Tarski.

To see how these metalinguistic and semantical notions too involve the ‘linguistic turn’ mentioned in n. 12 above, consider this. The premisses (some number of formulae, constructed from sentences by replacing all non-logical constants by symbols of appropriate sorts) of an argument lead to *deductive* (or proof-theoretic or syntactic) inconsistency if, via the axioms and rules of inference of logic, they together yield the conjunction of one formula with a second formula formed from the negation sign plus the first formula. The premisses of an argument lead to *semantic* inconsistency if there is no interpretation of the non-logical constants employed in the argument that would allow the premisses all to be true. Deductive inconsistency is a *linguistic* matter – a matter of what sentences of what forms (what formulae) can be deduced by the rules of inference (which are themselves rules about relations between kinds of formulae). The ideal is for such deductive consistency to be testable mechanically, without one’s even knowing how the formulae are to be interpreted – without knowing what the sentences from which the formulae were constructed affirm or are about. Semantic inconsistency, on the other hand, is (supposed to be) very much a matter of what formulae can be interpreted as being *about* – of what could be true and what could not be true, or, more precisely, of what the singular terms and predicates of the formulae can be interpreted as referring to or otherwise designating. It is sometimes thought that in semantics we are getting back to talking about real things and real attributes. But here one should not fail to notice that even when we are talking about those things in the world which singular terms and predicates refer to or otherwise designate – even when we are doing semantics – we are *never doing this except* via the linguistic entities which are the singular terms and predicates involved. We are still talking in the first instance about the language – the language with which we *hope* to describe these realities, and whose meanings or interpretations will determine these realities. On this semantical approach, nothing can be thought about except via what the language takes that thing to be (= what the meaning of the relevant

is that there is no substantial defect in supposing that Plato and Socrates would themselves have accepted the substantial accuracy of such analyses of Socratic dialectic.

These analytical–elenctic ideas are present for all to see in the doctrine of the so-called ‘Socratic elenchus’ which regiments each of the four or more supposed main arguments (‘elenchi’) of most of the stylometrically early dialogues of Plato into deductions of the following sort.

SOC-ELENCH: Socratic arguments typically consist, first, in Socrates’ asking of some primary question (sometimes, but not always, of the ‘What is *X*? form, but always a central question concerning human goodness or the human good). This primary question elicits from the interlocutor a ‘primary answer’, expressing the proposition that *p*, which answer Socrates then proceeds to attempt to refute. He does so by next asking several secondary questions – often of a trivial-looking nature, and indeed even of a quite irrelevant-looking nature¹⁶ – which then elicit certain ‘secondary’ answers, expressing the propositions that *q* and *r*. Socrates then proceeds to show that *p*, *q* and *r* together entail either a logical inconsistency or some other proposition the interlocutor finds repugnant. At this point Socrates – at

expression determines the reference to be). A metalinguistic approach to reality of such a kind represents, once more, ‘the linguistic turn’. But it is a matter of faith whether we can thus recover the realities. (The article of faith in question is equivalent to the claim that meaning determines reference.) This faith amongst proponents of the linguistic turn is not unlike the faith sense-datum theorists used to have that one could somehow recover reality by translating everything into talk of sense-data. We have already referred (n. 12 above) to the faith Hilbert had that he could translate talk of numbers and functions into talk of numerals and function-symbols (and indeed meaningless marks) and then recover newly validated numbers and functions – a faith Brouwer thought ended in the merest confusion of mathematics with metamathematics.

¹⁶ For example, few first-time readers of the *Republic* fail to feel such irrelevance when they contemplate Polemarchus’ primary answer that *justice is telling the truth and returning what one owes* (together with the secondary answer that *one owes good to friends and harm to enemies*) and Socrates’ subsequent question: who would be best able to help friends and harm enemies in matters of health and disease – the doctor or the just man? (331E–332D) ‘Why does Socrates think *ability* is relevant to questions of justice?’, the first-time reader asks. ‘And why should Polemarchus be forced to accept that it is?’ It is as if Socrates was urging on readers of his dialectic what Poe had to say about argument in the court system (‘The mystery of Marie Rogêt’ in Poe 1952: 382):

It is the malpractice of the courts to confine evidence and discussion to the bounds of apparent relevancy. Yet experience has shown, and a true philosophy will always show, that a vast, perhaps the larger, portion of truth arises from the seemingly irrelevant.

These remarks seem to us to support the approach we advocate in the opening paragraph of the present chapter, and to show the profound defects of analyses of what people are saying that employ the extraordinarily narrow conception of relevance built into the identity conditions of propositions. (See below, ch. 12, n. II.)

least in many cases – appears to conclude that he has shown that the primary proposition p is false.¹⁷

To repeat: we unfortunately cannot undertake to discuss in any detail in this book the large issues involved here – whether in the analytical-elenctic approach to philosophical argument in general, or in the theory of the so-called ‘Socratic elenchus’. (We report with regret that an attempt by Penner to include such a discussion proved likely to take the book over and make it twice as long as it already is, as well as delaying its publication by many months.)¹⁸ So, again, just a few remarks.

We believe that the ‘analytical–elenctic’ approach to Platonic dialogues, as illustrated in SOC-ELENCH, falsifies them in numerous ways, of which we shall here mention two. First, it falsifies them in the way that it regiment what interlocutors are claiming in their arguments into propositions. In so doing, it gives us criteria of identity for what Socrates and his interlocutors are saying and arguing for that are *far too narrow*, so falsifying what they – Socrates and his interlocutors – are claiming. Thus to take the example introduced in n. 3 above, we say that when Euthyphro uses the sentence ‘Piety is what is loved by the gods’ he is saying the same thing as he would have been saying had he used the sentence ‘Piety is what is loved

¹⁷ Notice the words ‘proposition’, ‘entail’, ‘deduction’, ‘logical inconsistency’ in this characterization of the so-called ‘Socratic elenchus’, as well as the expressions ‘validity’ and ‘soundness’ in the objection (AN-ELENCH) above. These modern metalinguistic words are crucial to the idea of the ‘Socratic elenchus’, as it is to be found since Robinson 1953. Robinson 1953: 7, 15, 22 speaks of the primary premiss p together with the secondary premisses q and r entailing an inconsistency. So too Vlastos 1994: 11, 20, 21, 23, 25, Brickhouse and Smith 2000: 93, 83, cf. 79–80; Benson 2000: 33, 48, 62–4, 65, nn. 26, 95. For validity and soundness, cf. Robinson 1953: 15; Santas 1979: 136, 138, 166, 178–9; Vlastos 1994: 20, nn. 40, 41; Irwin 1995: 18, 20 with 40; also Benson 2000: 45–6, 49, 69 n. 47. The reference to *propositions* is of course ubiquitous – though, as we have remarked above (n. 6), what is crucial here is not the word ‘proposition’ but the ‘logical powers’ doctrine. We ourselves think that the idea of the ‘Socratic elenchus’ that is commonplace within the community of students of Greek philosophy is so inextricably entwined with these metalinguistic notions of deduction, validity, entailment, propositions and the like that we ourselves cede the expression ‘the Socratic elenchus’ to proponents of that deduction / entailment conception of Socrates’ methods of conversing with and cross-examining his interlocutors. When speaking in our own persons we shall restrict ourselves to such expressions as ‘converse with’, ‘cross-examine’, and ‘Socratic dialectic’. We should also mention here that we endorse *one* view in Davidson 1985 – the view that these latter expressions are quite as appropriate to Plato’s philosophical methods in middle and later dialogues as in the early dialogues – and without change of ‘sense’. Cf. also Chapter 4, n. 25, on Vlastos on the *Lysis* as not involving the so-called ‘elenchus’.

¹⁸ Some of this material will be found in Penner Unpub d. Penner is grateful to George Anagnostopoulos and Jerry Santas and members of their seminar at the University of California, Irvine and the University of California, San Diego, for giving him the chance to present some of the ideas here in Chapter 10 at two meetings of the seminar, and to discover just how much more work needed to be done to make clear the larger issues involved here. (For the same reason, Penner acknowledges a very large debt also to Antonio Chu.)

by such beings as Zeus,’ while the propositional analysis makes it the case that Euthyphro would be saying something quite different by means of the second sentence, since (without the premiss ‘the gods are such beings as Zeus’) neither sentence is inferable from the other by purely logical means. It should be readily apparent that this makes the criteria of identity for what someone is saying by means of a given sentence very narrow indeed.

Second, the counting up of ‘elenchi’ in a dialogue – Robinson (1953: 24) counts 39 in the early dialogues, Benson (2000: 58–80) counts 5 in the *Euthyphro*, 4 in the *Laches*, 8 in the *Charmides* – tends to lead to the breaking up of the dialogue into fragments of elenchus length held together only by a literary stitching that is largely irrelevant from a philosophical point of view. For such analyses make it far easier for one to conclude that what is being discussed in one so-called ‘elenchus’ is not, and is not part of, what is being discussed in another. (Again, the point is about the narrowness of the criteria of identity for what is being discussed: an elenchus involving the sentence ‘Piety is what is loved by the gods’ would so far be logically independent of an elenchus involving the sentence ‘Piety is what such beings as Zeus love.’) On our reading Plato would take it that such so-called ‘elenchi’ are intimately inter-dependent. At any rate, we are convinced that this breaking up of Plato’s text into elenchus-length fragments tends to deprive the dialogues of such unity as they may have in Socrates’ mind or in the mind of Plato the author. We believe this happens all the time among modern readers of Plato, and that it is the saddest defect of all too many (otherwise extraordinarily able) interpretations of most of Plato’s stylometrically early dialogues, regularly undermining the extraordinary unity that these beautiful dialogues often have – and that we strongly believe the *Lysis* has. All we can do here is to hope that we have been as clear as we can be in brief compass about our own assumptions, by contrast with those which we oppose, and hope that the reader will keep an open mind on the question whether the unity we have been able to find in the *Lysis* is not at least some evidence favouring our approach here.

2 ‘THE PRINCIPLE OF REAL REFERENCE’

We have one further clarification to make of the philosophical assumptions we attribute to Socrates and Plato. It has to do with what we have several times in Chapters 1–9 referred to as the ‘principle of real reference’. It makes its first appearance in the *Lysis* in some otherwise largely inconsequential remarks Socrates makes to Hippothales in the introductory section of the

dialogue, where Socrates says of what Hippothales refers to as his praise of Lysis that it is actually praise of Hippothales himself. Hippothales replies:

'But it's not to myself, Socrates, that I'm composing or singing.'

'You certainly don't *think* so,' I said.

'But how's that?' he said.

'It's to you most of all,' I said, 'that these songs of yours refer (*eis se teinousin*) . . .' (205D5–E1)

This shows that what Socrates is claiming here is that what Hippothales would be saying using the kind of sentence he *does* use, namely,

The songs I sing are in praise of Lysis,

is the same as he would be saying had he used the sentence

The songs I sing are in praise of myself.

To put the point in another way, the reference of 'this praise of Lysis' is 'this praise of Hippothales'.¹⁹ How can this be?

The point here is based upon 'the principle of real reference'. The idea is that while Hippothales doesn't *think* he has in mind or intends to refer to praise of himself, nevertheless that *is* what he has in mind to refer to or intends to refer to. How so? Doesn't Hippothales have some kind of first-person authority over what he has in mind or intends to refer to? We think not, and we think Socrates and Plato also thought not, since in our view Socrates and Plato would have rejected the (Protagorean) idea of first-person authority. Nor is our point merely that what Hippothales has in mind to refer to or intends to refer to *does in fact* – not in Hippothales' own mind: rather entirely *outside* of the realm of what Hippothales has in mind or intends to refer to – designate something other than what he thinks. (For those who know the relevant literature, it will be apparent that we are discussing here, on the one hand, the traditional opaque, or better *oblique* readings of such psychological expressions as 'intends to refer to', and on the other hand *transparent* readings of such contexts – or in other terminology, *de dicto* versus *de re* readings of such contexts. These are the sorts of readings that in our 1994 we called inside/outside theories of psychological contexts.)²⁰

¹⁹ Cf. n. 7 above.

²⁰ See Penner (Unpub b), where it is argued that there *are* no so-called transparent senses, since they would require that there be a relation that is in some sense psychological between the subject of a psychological state and the supposed object of the psychological state – where, however, the subject need have no attitude whatever towards the object! If there are *opaque* (or, better, *oblique*) senses of psychological verbs, then the so-called transparent senses are best understood as existential

What our point is – given that it cannot be expressed in either of the traditional ways – will be best brought out by considering what Socrates says about the real nature of cutting at *Cratylus* 387A with 385D–396A. Here Socrates says that when I want to cut, I don't want to cut in accordance with what people *believe* about cutting, or indeed in accordance with our conventions for the use of the word 'cutting', but in accordance with the real nature of cutting. We take the implication to be that this *desire to refer to* the real nature of cutting rather than to what people's beliefs about cutting pick out from the world – or what our conventions for the use of the word 'cutting' pick out from the world – is a *desire to refer to* that real nature *even if that real nature is different from what we (or the conventions of our language) take it to be*. The result is that in standard cases we can be intending to refer to something and not know what that thing is. (This is what happens in cancer research applications. Some of these will be applications for funds to find out what cancer is in the distinct belief that the process of discovery will throw up in answer something not currently designated by any of our beliefs or any meanings in our dictionaries – something, indeed, whose nature may falsify both those beliefs and those meanings. So the cancer researcher doesn't know what the thing is that he is referring to, other than having a few ideas which, if he thinks them *more* on the right lines than the usual ideas, he can still be fairly confident are not in the end going to prove correct. There is a similar phenomenon to be observed in what happens when we refer to those we love. We have no desire to speak, or to be taken as speaking, of those determined by the totality of our beliefs about them, or by the conventions of our language for the words involved in expressions by means of which we refer to them. For we have no desire to think about those beings that our beliefs are exactly true of. Given human fallibility, such beings are not to be found in *this* world, and indeed are to be found at best in some *other* world – some dream world of ours. But it is the actual people in question, the ones in the real world, as they are, with all of their properties known and unknown that we want to think about, speak about and to be taken to be speaking about. One more example, which Penner has long used in his classes: Edith comes home, and Archie says to her, 'The Reverend Felcher called, Edith.' She says, 'The Reverend Fletcher, Archie.'

generalizations of the corresponding sentence with the psychological verb taken obliquely. (Cf. the overt existential generalization in the closely related sentence 'There is a description [“The Queen of Thebes who is *not* my mother”] under which Oedipus wants to marry this woman who is in fact his own mother'.) In addition, since we also deny that there *is* any first-person authority, we also deny there are any such things as oblique or *de dicto* readings of psychological statements. A whole new approach, we think, more in line with what we find in Socrates and Plato, is necessary.

He replies ‘Whatever!’ Archie’s point, unarticulated here – and in this case, surely well taken – is: ‘You know who I am talking about; I know who I am talking about; who gives a damn what his name is. If I’ve got something wrong, you fix it up!’ That is, we are all clear who it is that Archie *has in mind*, or *intends to refer to*. It is the particular – at best incompletely known²¹ – reverend in question, with all of his properties known and unknown, that Archie intends to single out.)

We believe this to be a familiar phenomenon in Socrates and Plato. Let us illustrate that briefly. First, there is a passage, *Gorgias* 466A–468E, which we shall be discussing in more detail in §4 below – in connection with the idea of all desire being desire for the real good. This says that what people are aiming at in their desire is – *from the inside* – the *real* (and at least partly unknown) good, even if that real good is different from what they believe it to be. They don’t know what the real good *is*, but that is what they want – not merely what they *think* is good (the *apparent* good). ‘If I have it wrong, you fix it up!’ Second, this idea is also to be found at *Gorgias* 474B, where Socrates is explaining to Polus his view that while he is no good at persuading crowds, he can bring as witness for his position one person – the person he is conversing with at the moment:

SOC.: . . . For it is *my* opinion that I and you – and everyone else – hold that doing injustice is worse than suffering it, and also that not being punished is worse than being punished.

POL.: But *I* don’t think that either I or anyone else would prefer suffering injustice to doing it – and would even you?

SOC.: Yes, and so would you and everyone else!

POL.: Far from it – either in my case or in anyone else’s. (474B2–10)

As in the case of Hippothales, Socrates is telling Polus that he believes something Polus himself denies he believes. How does Socrates get to this? Once again, the issue is what Polus *has in mind* to refer to, or *intends* to refer to, when he uses the expression for doing injustice. Is what he wants to talk about what is determined by the totality of his *beliefs* about doing injustice, or about what our linguistic conventions for the word *adikein* determine in the world? Even if what those beliefs or conventions determine could only exist in some dream world of Polus’ (assuming, given human fallibility, that a number of his beliefs and a number of these conventions are actually

²¹ ‘But the person we are talking about can’t be *completely* unknown to us!’ We do not deny that if someone is too badly wrong in the reference they make, this may destroy the reference altogether, or that it may leave the speaker uncertain *what* to say he is referring to. The question is whether we need to be right in every respect – and whether we need to know in advance in what respects our view of the thing we are referring to is correct and in what respects our view is incorrect. Cf. also the note after next.

incorrect about what doing injustice is)? Or does he have in mind to refer to, or intend to refer to, doing injustice as it really is in *this* world? ('If I have it wrong in various ways, you fix it up!') But then – should Socrates be right, and should we 'fix up' Polus' error – this doing injustice will be a doing of injustice which is worse than suffering injustice. That being so, in thinking doing injustice is whatever it really is, Polus would be thinking – unbeknownst to himself, of course – that doing injustice is worse than suffering it. Thus does the principle of real reference generate Socrates' claim that Polus agrees with Socrates²² – even though, of course, there is no obstacle to Socrates' granting that Polus also *disagrees* with him.

This said, we should note that we have also seen the principle of real reference elsewhere in the *Lysis*. First, there is the passage where, in arguing that a person cannot love an object that is bad because what is bad will harm one, and no one wants what harms them, Socrates appears to require the assumption that the object that is bad is not even desired – even if one in ignorance believes that the object in question is good (Chapter 3, §(c); Chapter 4, §I, para. 1). We suggest that this only makes sense on the assumption that the object we want has to be something we want *as it really is* and even if it differs from how we think of it. Put in another way, since we do not want the harm this supposedly desired object will lead to, we do not desire the object, even if we (mistakenly) think we do. Once again, the idea is that what we desire (even from the inside – as *we* see what we desire) will be something incompletely known to us. The point here is closely related to the point just made about *Gorgias* 466A–468E – if it is not the very same point. Second, there is the passage about the poets 'riddling' us, in (as it were) pretending that they think that 'like loves like' covers cases of the bad loving the bad, while in fact their 'riddle' is to get us to see that what they really believe – given that the bad are not ever even like themselves, let alone each other – is that 'like loves like' applies only in the case of likes that are *good* (Chapter 4 above, esp. nn. 28, 35).

To return briefly to the Hippothales passage: what we find there is that if Hippothales wants to be talking about his praise of Lysis as that praise

²² Our treatment of this passage may be contrasted with that of Vlastos (1994), which involves the postulating of an ambiguity to 'belief' (compare the oblique and transparent senses of 'believes that' discussed in the preceding note). According to Vlastos, there are *two senses* of belief: the ordinary 'overt' sense in which Polus believes just what he *thinks* he believes, namely, that doing injustice is *not* worse than suffering injustice, and what Vlastos (1994) admits is a 'marginal' ('covert') sense of 'belief' – we would have called it an *ad hoc* sense of 'belief' – in which one believes everything entailed by what one believes in the original sense. This marginal sense of 'belief' seems to us as plainly artificial as the supposed 'transparent' sense of belief. We think that underlying the mistake, here and in n. 20, is the suggestion that belief (and therefore intention to refer to something) must have first-person authority: you must know what you believe and you must know what it is you intend to refer to. It is this belief that is challenged by the principle of real reference.

is in *this* world, and not as it is in some other dream-world of his own, then the praise he intends to be talking about is the praise which a prudent Hippothales would see was a form of self-praise that would disadvantage him. Unless Hippothales is willing to represent himself as one who chooses *imprudently*, then he will grant that the praise of his darling *is* the praise of himself. If one takes Hippothales to desire to live in the real world (and not some dream-world), then one will take it that what Hippothales wants to refer to here is his songs of praise as they actually *are* in the real world – even if the way they are differs from how he thinks of them.

That is at any rate all we can say here on ‘the principle of real reference’ – the principle that the object a speaker has in mind to refer to, or intends to refer to, is the object as it is in the real world, even if it differs (as it almost always will) from the ways in which he thinks of it. We take this principle to be one of the most central features of Platonism.^{23,24}

²³ Penner (Unpub A) also makes use of the principle of real reference in arguing, contra Sachs 1963 that the Socrates in the *Republic* (who says, in effect, ‘justice is a certain sort of psychological well-adjustment’) can disagree with Thrasymachus (who says ‘justice is the weak following the rules laid down in the interest of the stronger’) – in spite of the appearance that they are talking about two different things. For Thrasymachus’ intention is correctly represented not by

I am referring to the weak following the rules,

or even by

I am referring to the weak following the rules laid down in the interest of the stronger whether or not that that should turn out to have anything to do with the real nature of justice,

let alone by

I am referring to the weak following the rules laid down in the interest of the stronger even though I grant that this has nothing to do with the real nature of justice,

but rather by

I am referring to the weak following the rules laid down in the interest of the stronger, i.e. the real nature of justice even if how it is with it is different from how I think it is.

The result is – since both Socrates and Thrasymachus, when they use an expression of the sort ‘the real nature of justice’, will intend to refer to that real nature, even if, in various ways, they are mistaken about that real nature – that they can disagree with each other over the truth about justice; despite the fact that believers in meanings would say they each ‘mean something different’ by ‘justice’. Notice that none of this is to deny that when Thrasymachus discovers that the ‘i.e.’ above doesn’t work, he may come to the view that he no longer knows *what* to say (though, in fact, in the *Republic*, Thrasymachus does appear to give up and admit that he was wrong about the thing he intended to refer to all along). The discovery that one no longer knows what to say when the ‘i.e.’ one was employing doesn’t work represents a difference, but not a decisive difference, from the more usual case where perception that the ‘i.e.’ doesn’t work leads to a straightforward and pretty well automatic retrenchment. (‘The next president of the United States, Hubert Horatio Hornblower, . . . er, sorry, Humphrey.’ Here there isn’t any difficulty in seeing that it was Senator Humphrey to whom Jimmy Carter all along intended to refer. The mistake the ‘i.e.’ constructs is over-ridden without difficulty by who the person intended actually is.)

²⁴ The idea that the reference of ‘cutting’ is determined neither by our beliefs about cutting, nor by our linguistic conventions for the use of ‘cutting’, would of course lead Plato to deny the modern

We turn now to a statement of the principal conclusions to be argued for in the [next chapter](#), along with a preliminary airing of a problem about self-interest.

**3 PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE LYSIS TO BE
ARGUED FOR IN THE NEXT CHAPTER; AND A PROBLEM
ABOUT SELF-INTEREST**

Here we begin with a simple list of the conclusions at which we shall arrive in our re-reading of the *Lysis* in the [next chapter](#).

- I. In elaborating on our identification of the mysterious ‘first friend’ of the ostensible main conclusion of the dialogue with *wisdom* or *knowledge* (knowledge of the good, as it happens), we will show Socrates affirming the correctness of this identification of the ‘first friend’ with knowledge or wisdom *without having him reject* two common alternative identifications of the ‘first friend’ (as *happiness*, and as what Plato in the *Republic* would call ‘*the Form of the Good*’).
- II. We will put forward a proposal to show how *philia*, *erōs* and desire (desire for good) are so related to each other that, while each is distinct

assumption that meaning determines reference. We understand the meaning-reference distinction in the following absolutely standard – Fregean – way (Frege 1892): The *reference* of the expression ‘The Morning Star’ is the object in the world for which that expression stands. That object is, as it happens, the very same object, the planet Venus, that the quite different expression ‘The Evening Star’ stands for. Two expressions, one and the same reference. The *meaning* of the expression ‘The Morning Star’ is *not* the reference of that expression, however. To see why this is so, think of the meaning of the expression ‘The Morning Star’ as a set of instructions embodied in a dictionary, or simply in our knowledge of English, for taking us from the expression ‘The Morning Star’ to the thing in the world that it stands for. Take the meaning of the expression ‘The Evening Star’ as a similar set of instructions. Then the instructions assigned to the referring expression ‘The Morning Star’, namely,

look for the last bright heavenly body beside the moon in the morning

and the instructions assigned to the referring expression ‘The Evening Star’, namely,

look for the first bright heavenly body beside the moon in the evening

are plainly different sets of instructions. So, we say, the expressions ‘The Morning Star’ and ‘The Evening Star’ have different *meanings* – in spite of their having the same reference. Two expressions, two meanings, and just one reference.

Now for those who believe in meanings at all, meanings *determine* reference in the following way. Given the way the world is, the reference (if any) of a referring expression – some causal theorists make proper names an (unexplained) exception here – is the thing in the world which the relevant set of instructions takes one to. That is, the reference is the thing satisfying the conditions laid down in the meaning. (Even with indexicals – words like ‘I’, ‘now’, ‘here’, ‘there’ and so forth – meaning is still taken to determine reference given a specification of *context*.)

It is our view that once one abandons the doctrine that meaning determines reference, there is no remaining motive for any notion of meaning at all within philosophy. For more on our reasons for denying that meaning determines reference, see also the [preceding note](#).

from the other, nevertheless *philia* and *erōs* each have as their underlying structure the desire for good. That is, we will be proposing that *philia* and *erōs* are particular forms of, or particular species of, the desire for good.

- III. We will suggest (a) that Socrates holds that anyone who has this desire for good has, as her or his ultimate desire, generative of all of his or her so-called ‘voluntary’ actions – actions being thought of as means to the ends desired in those actions – desires for *his or her own* good (that is, his or her own maximum possible good given his or her circumstances). We will also show that (b) the sort of desire for good just introduced generates, on the basis of Socratic passages in *other* dialogues, what we will call a teleological – and indeed *hierarchically* teleological – account of desire for good. (That teleological, hierarchical account of desire for good – prefigured in claim (a) by the representation of so-called ‘voluntary’, actions as means to further ends – is introduced in §4 below.) And we will show that (c) while this teleological, hierarchical conception of *desire for good* is hardly explicit in the *Lysis*, there is nevertheless excellent evidence for the presence of precisely such a teleological, hierarchical conception of *philia* (and indeed of *erōs*) in the dialogue. The presence of these latter conceptions – together with what we shall call the ‘near-interchangeability’ of *philia*, *erōs* and desire in the last part of the dialogue – will provide confirmation of the truth of each of the claims (a) and (b).

But there is another implication of claim (IIIa) above that requires our attention for a moment. For this reference to all desire for good being desire for the agent’s *own* good will create, for many, the apparent difficulty that the Socratic accounts of *philia* are, at base (so to speak), self-interested. To many modern interpreters of ancient philosophy (who think that what Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics are all about is *morality*), this succeeds in making the Socratic account of *philia* either a contradiction in terms, or the next thing to it. For the main point about morality – the main attraction morality has for its proponents – is its intrinsic over-riding of self-interest in the cases (taken always to be possible) of conflict between morality and self-interest. This intrinsic connection to morality is evidently what is presupposed in conceptual analyses of love and/or friendship after the manner of the single most influential article on the *Lysis* over the past half-century or so. We refer to Vlastos 1969, which offers a particular conceptual analysis of love as a baseline for assessing the account of *philia* in the *Lysis*. Vlastos’ suggested analysis, derived from some remarks in Aristotle (though

given a special twist by Vlastos, as he himself seems to admit)²⁵ may be expressed as follows:

VI.1. For x to love y is for x to desire the good of y purely for y 's sake and quite independently of any regard whatever for x 's own good.

Evidently, if one's love for someone is based upon, or has as part of its underlying structure, one's desire for one's own good, one would not be desiring the good of the other person independently of any regard for one's own good. So on this conception, love requires morality, or at least pure altruism – we might call it 'morally pure altruism'. The account of love based on self-interest which we find in the *Lysis* would not, then, after all, by Vlastos' analysis, be an account of love at all; it would be a complete non-starter.²⁶ That is indeed what Vlastos concludes. But, we think, he does so on the basis of largely unquestioned (though widely shared) philosophical

²⁵ Vlastos 1969: 3 gets the locution concerning desiring the good of one's friend 'for the friend's own sake and not for one's own' from Aristotle (*Rhetoric* III.4, 1380b35–1381a1), and uses that to support his own reading of 'for its own sake' in the *Nicomachean Ethics* in terms of total independence from one's own good (the modern 'intrinsic good', closely connected to the moral good). But Vlastos then admits (5–6) that for Aristotle true friendship requires that one get one's own good, as well as the good of one's friend, from the relationship (*Nicomachean Ethics* VIII.3, 1156b7ff. and VIII.4, 1157b1–1158a1, esp. 1157a33: 'and loving the friend they love what is good for themselves'). Instead of concluding that he has not correctly understood Aristotle's use of 'for the other person's own sake' in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Vlastos concludes that Aristotle is confused, and mixes together something self-interested and something inconsistent with egoism, namely a 'for its own sake' that allows nothing of self-interest. (More on Aristotle in our Epilogue.) We admit that the *Rhetoric* statement remains. But there is hardly enough context to be sure just how seriously to take 'not for one's own sake' there. The point could have been as little as a point against *selfishness* – not caring for others at all – as opposed to a wiser self-interest. We discuss the issue of self-interest and desiring the good of one's friend in Chapters 11–12 below – but see also [next note](#). And we discuss in Chapter 11, §8 the interpretation of 'for its own sake' in Socratic passages in Plato.

²⁶ Vlastos' initial understanding of 'for its own sake' in terms of 'intrinsic good' and even 'moral good' – along with the consequence for his account of love and friendship – emerges clearly enough at Vlastos 1969: 10, n. 24, where he says that

Aristotle's 'wishing another's good for his sake, not yours', though still far from the Kantian conception of treating persons as 'ends in themselves', is the closest any philosopher comes to it in antiquity.

Thus in Vlastos' account, loving someone is valuing that person *as a person*. We regard such a view of friendship as an unwarranted intrusion of morality into friendship and love. (Compare Kant's preposterous bit of *New Testament* exegesis at *Groundwork* sec. 1, para. 13, Ak. IV: 399, according to which the command to 'love your enemies' cannot be a command to *feel* love for your enemies, but can only be a command to act in certain ways – whatever you may feel – because it is morally right to do so. If Kant's view of what *feeling love* is leads him to this frankly incredible account of what Jesus had in mind, so much the worse, one may say, for his view of what it is to feel love for someone.) We grant, of course that it may well be easier for us to reject this implausibly morality laden Kantian and Vlastosian conception of love than it will be to reject a more common conception of love that also opposes any suggestion of the presence of self-interest in love – but without any necessary reference to morality. This is the idea that Rudebusch 2003: 131ff., esp. 131–2, has put as the idea that love requires of us a 'pure heart'.

assumptions – philosophical assumptions we ourselves reject, and believe Socrates and Plato would also reject. For Socrates and for Plato, and also for us (Penner and Rowe), love *is* in the end self-interested. Since we spend some time in the following two chapters justifying this claim, it will be convenient to proceed in the present chapter as if it can be made out. Then if Chapters 11 and 12 fail to convince, so will the present chapter. The present chapter restricts itself to other questions and difficulties.

But lest the position we here endorse seem a *total* non-starter against Vlastos' Kantian altruism – morally pure altruism – we offer some softening-up reflections on the following famous Kantian remarks on the topic of morality:

To be beneficent when we can is a duty; and besides this, there are many minds so sympathetically constituted that, without any other motive of vanity or self-interest, they find a pleasure in spreading joy around them and can take delight in the satisfaction of others so far as it is their own work. But I maintain that in such a case an action of this kind, however proper, however amiable it may be, has nevertheless no true moral worth, but is on a level with other inclinations, e.g. the inclination to honour, which, if it is happily directed to that which is in fact of public utility and accordant with duty and consequently honourable, deserves praise and encouragement, but not esteem. For the maxim lacks the moral import, namely, that such actions be done from duty, not from inclination. Put the case that the mind of that philanthropist were clouded by sorrow of his own, extinguishing all sympathy with the lot of others, and that, while he still has the power to benefit others in distress, he is not touched by their trouble because he is absorbed with his own; and now suppose that he tears himself out of this dead insensibility, and performs the action without any inclination to it, but simply from duty, then first has his action its genuine moral worth. Further still; if nature has put little sympathy in the heart of this or that man; if he, supposed to be an upright man, is by temperament cold and indifferent to the sufferings of others, perhaps because in respect of his own he is provided with the special gift of patience and fortitude and supposes, or even requires, that others should have the same – and such a man would certainly not be the meanest product of nature – but if nature had not specially framed him for a philanthropist, would he not still find in himself a source from whence to give himself a far higher worth than that of a good-natured temperament could be? Unquestionably. It is just in this that the moral worth of the character is brought out which is incomparably the highest of all, namely, that he is beneficent, not from inclination, but from duty.²⁷

We ourselves knew, and were lucky enough to have as a friend, a person who exemplified (in our view) exactly the characteristics Kant attributes to

²⁷ *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*: 398–9 (page numbers from the Akademie edition, (vol. iv)).

those ‘minds so sympathetically constituted that, without any other motive of vanity or self-interest, they find a pleasure in spreading joy around them and can take delight in the satisfaction of others’ – a person, alas, taken from us too soon, of whom his best friends will tell you that hardly a day passes that they do not feel the impulse to call him up to talk to him about some bit of philosophy or music or about some personal matter. We of course prefer to put Kant’s point about *having a sympathetic constitution* in the rather more Socratic terms of *having the wisdom, whatever one’s natural constitution, to understand the place of the happiness of those around one in one’s own happiness*. (On the other hand, we admit that we do not know, and probably never will know now, whether our friend would agree with us about what if any place morality plays in friendship.) It is at any rate clear than on Vlastos’ Kantian view, our friend would come in second to the person Kant describes as ‘not the meanest product of nature’. We, however, know whom we would rather have as a friend. And there is surely little doubt that any child knows which he or she would rather have as a parent.

It is true that Kant invites us to reflect on what would happen if people like our friend were to face a situation where their life was being clouded with sorrow – whether they wouldn’t turn egoistic in a nasty way, whereas the moralist will stay firm. But if one is to indulge in such attributions of possible motives, we too may wonder about the motives resulting from this disconnection – except in one’s moral commitments – from the happiness of others in Vlastos’ Kantian friend. The part played by morality in Western civilization is not without warnings of these sorts of aberrations. We recall the many horror stories of the upright Victorian father who, when his wishes are crossed by his children, seeks to impose his wishes on them from what he represents as purely moral motives. We think, in short, that one should not simply adopt Kantian, principled friendship in preference to the friendship that sees (what we take to be) the truth about the part played in our lives by the happiness of those around us. But we shall talk of this a bit more fully below.

Our next task, to be undertaken in §4 of the present chapter, will be to introduce and explain the psychology of action needed to ground the teleological, hierarchical conception of desire for one’s own good referred to in (IIIa) and (IIIb) above, as well as others of the claims in the same list. The psychology of action in question is that brand of psychological egoism²⁸ known among interpreters as ‘Socratic intellectualism’. As already

²⁸ Psychological egoism is the view that an agent’s every action *in fact* aims (ultimately) at the agent’s own good. Psychological egoism is usually contrasted with ethical egoism, the latter being taken

suggested above, this conception of the psychology of action is not explicit in the *Lysis* (though the teleological, hierarchical conception of *philia*, or love, for the first friend exhibits a parallel to it so remarkable as hardly to be coincidental). In any case, since our explanations will use this conception extensively in the account of the *Lysis* that follows in Chapter 11 – above all, in connection with the proper understanding of the teleological and hierarchical conception of *philia* – it will be desirable to have it before us. In the [next section](#), therefore, we give a slightly extended account of that psychology of action. At first this section may seem disproportionate to our purpose of interpreting the *Lysis*. But if there is anything to our proposed explanations, i.e. (i)–(iii) above, we believe it will have been well worth our while to have spent the time and effort required by the next section.

4 SOCRATIC INTELLECTUALISM INTRODUCED

Socratic intellectualism, as we construe it, is a psychology of action. It offers an explanation-scheme for every so-called ‘voluntary’ action whatever. It has at least two unusual features that need to be noticed right away. The first, which is quite familiar to readers of Plato, is the extremely intellectual-looking character of the explanations involved: every intended action conforms to the agent’s belief at the moment of action as to what is best for the agent in the agent’s circumstances. The second unusual feature is rather less familiar, though it lies in plain sight in the dialogues. This has to do with the question whether, if the agent does something he or she *thinks* is best for him or her in the circumstances, and the action turns out not to have been best for him or her, the agent wanted to do the action in question.

There are two different answers to be found in Plato’s dialogues. The first answer – that the agent does want to do the action that will in fact

as a doctrine not about how people *do* act, but about how people *ought* to act – a *normative* or *evaluative* or *moral* doctrine. That is, ethical egoism asserts that (by some normative, evaluative or moral system), one *ought* to seek one’s own good, or that some norms, values or morals make it the case that it is (morally) *good* that one seek one’s own good. As an example that will be familiar to some, consider the views of Ayn Rand: since it is her view that looking to your own interest (and indeed – a further matter – looking to your own interests *as against the interests of others*) is a moral imperative, she is a clear case of an ethical egoist.

Now Socrates believes that it *is* good that one seek one’s own good. But not, we believe, on the basis of any normative or evaluative or moral system. Rather, we suppose that as Socrates thought that (1) it is a matter of scientific fact that good knives are sharp and also a matter of scientific fact that cutting is the good end to which the sharpness of knives are means, so too he thought that (2) it is a matter of scientific fact that a good person has the knowledge that is virtue (excellence) and also a matter of scientific fact that happiness is the good end to which the virtuous (excellent) person’s knowledge that is virtue (excellence) is the best means. It is thus not a matter of norms or values or morals. Just a matter of fact. So, whatever one of us (Penner) has said in the past, the expression ‘ethical egoist’ should not be used for Socrates. We prefer simply to speak of a purely factual ‘Socratic ethics’.

turn out badly – is the only one most interpreters ever succeed in finding. This answer can be found wherever Socrates is working from beliefs of his interlocutors, and perhaps also, on some occasions, when he is simply, as Berkeley would put it, ‘speaking with the vulgar’. But it is arguable that such ‘speaking with the vulgar’ is just another case of working from beliefs of actual or potential interlocutors. In that case, this first answer to the question – that

VULG. the agent does want to do the action he or she does – even when it will turn out not to maximize the agent’s available happiness or good –

is never an answer Socrates will give in his own person. (According to this answer – which is *not* Socrates’ answer – when Helen ran away with Paris but that action turned out worse for her than other available alternatives, it remains true that, at the time, she *did* still want to do the action.) The second, and very different, answer is the one that Socrates, and also Plato, will give when speaking in terms of their *own* deepest convictions about human desire and human action. This is that

SOC. the agent does not want to do the action he or she is doing – the one that will turn out not to maximize the agent’s available happiness or good.

(According to this second answer – which *is* Socrates’ own answer – Helen only *thought* she wanted to run away with Paris. In fact, and unbeknownst to her at the time, she did not want to run away with Paris.) This second answer – rather puzzling, at any rate the first time one opts to take it seriously – will be deployed below, along with some textual evidence for it.

Socratic intellectualism²⁹ starts from the claim that every action whatever of the sort Aristotle used to call ‘voluntary’ results from a certain generalized desire, i.e.

²⁹ For the formulation of Socratic intellectualism that follows, see Penner’s O’Neil Memorial Lectures (= Unpub c), from which much of this material is taken, as well as a formulation now available in Gill 2005. The formulation derives in the first instance from *Gorgias* 466A–468E, a passage which tells us clearly enough why someone does an action if (Case 1) the action turns out to be [maximally] beneficial [in the circumstances]. For in that case, we are told, the agent is doing what he or she *wanted* to do. But, as will soon become apparent, if (Case 2) the action turns out to be harmful – less than maximally beneficial – Socrates in this passage (and a few others, to be discussed later) will say, paradoxically, that the agent *did not do what he or she wanted to do*, but rather simply did what *seemed best*. That raises the following problem (put to Penner most insistently, and most helpfully, by Antonio Chu): but if the agent didn’t want to do the action which unfortunately turned out badly, why on earth did he or she do it? Socrates never addresses this question. Yet it is a question that needs answering. How can a belief-desire account of the explanation of voluntary action account for the agent’s doing actions he or she *didn’t want to do*? Penner has provided such an account, first in Penner and Rowe 1994. That account will turn out to be embodied in the present treatment of Socratic intellectualism: see the discussion of ‘Case 2’ below.

DES. the desire for *whatever action may be* the best means currently available to me, in the circumstances I am in, to the end of maximizing the amount of happiness (or of ultimate good) that I will achieve over a complete life,³⁰

together with

BEL. the belief that *this action here and now* realizes the best means in question, and thus instantiates the general characterization given in (DES.).

(More about how this belief concerning a particular action results from other beliefs and the dialectical deliberative process later in this section.) Now, following up on our question just above, we need to divide our development of this basic position by cases – into the case where the belief in question, about which action is best, is *true*, and the case where the belief in question is *false*. This will be necessary if we are to capture Socrates' view of what agents want to do – that is, when he is not speaking with the vulgar, but in accordance with his deepest convictions.

Case 1 is where the belief (BEL.) is *true*. Then when the action identified in (BEL.) is substituted into (DES.), (DES.) is transformed, by a sort of identity through change, into what we propose to call an 'executive desire',

EXDES. the desire to do this action here and now which is the really best means to the agent's maximal happiness (maximal good),

³⁰ The analysis offered here begins from

(i) the desire to do *now* whatever action may be the really best means available to one's happiness or ultimate good.

This is a simplification from a fuller account which would generate that desire further back – from

(ii) the generalized desire for one's own greatest happiness or ultimate good over a complete life,

together with the fact (which we take to be something like a law of nature) that

(iii) humans, unlike oysters, are beings whose reaction to their desires is to *act* in such a way as to fulfil them,

so that

(iv) with beings who desire their own ultimate good, they will, at any one instant, necessarily desire whatever particular action is the best action currently available to them in their circumstances as the means to that ultimate good.

But this is just (i) above, concerning desire for whatever action may be the best means. Thus, our simplification consists in beginning immediately with the latter desire, i.e. (i), for the present simply taking the part played by (ii), the generalized desire for happiness, for granted. The reason for calling this a 'generalized' desire is indicated by the phrasing '*whatever action may be* the best means . . .'. The idea is that that phrasing gives us no particular action. The agent wants *whatever* particular action is best at this particular instant prior to his or her wanting *any* particular action. For the agent hasn't as yet arrived at any belief as to the identity of the particular action that *is* the really best means available. This desire remains generalized until such time as the agent arrives at such a particular belief. At that point, as a result of the substitution for 'whatever action' of the particular action identified by the belief, the desire transforms itself into what we call below an 'executive desire'.

so that the action take place immediately.³¹ (An executive desire is a desire explanatory of a voluntary action which has actually taken place.) In this case, where the belief is true and so the action is the really best means, Socrates will say that in so acting the agent ‘did what he or she wanted to do’.

Case 2, by contrast, is where the belief identified in (BEL.) is false. Then Socrates will say one of two things, depending upon whether (i) he is employing an interlocutor’s premiss, and so ‘speaking with the vulgar’, as in (VULG.) above, or whether (ii) he decides to speak in accordance with his deepest beliefs about human motivation, as in (SOC.) above. When he speaks with the vulgar – when arguing from views expressed or held by others – Socrates will say something that to moderns looks very close to what he says in Case 1 – though in fact it is *not* the same thing, since it will involve having the agent go for the *apparently* best means rather than for the *really* best means. (For if, as in Case 2, the belief as to what the really best means is, is false, then the action identified by the belief as the best means *will not be* the really best means, but will only be *believed* to be: that is, it will only be the *apparently* best means.) Given this retreat from the real good to the apparent good – a retreat characteristic of virtually all post-Platonic philosophy, from Aristotle and Aquinas through to Anscombe and Davidson – substitution of belief (BEL.), even when (BEL.) is false, into generalized desire (DES.), is still taken – by these post-Platonic philosophers – to transform (DES.) into an executive desire which is

*EXDES./APP.³² the desire to do this action here and now which is the *apparently* best means to the agent’s maximal happiness (maximal good);³³

a desire which immediately brings about the action that the agent at that point apparently wanted to do – though, as already pointed out, because (BEL.) is false, the action is not in fact the really best action which the agent was said to want in (DES.).

³¹ We borrow the word ‘immediately’ here from the Aristotelian psychology of action (*Nicomachean Ethics* vii.3, 1147a28). Aristotle’s ‘immediately’ (*euthus*), however, is qualified by a ‘provided that nothing interferes’ (1147a30–1, cf. 33–4). Aristotle is thinking here of a deliberate action hijacked by an irrational appetite that drags the agent into an akratic (irrational, weak-willed) action. In Socratic intellectualism, there is absolutely no provision for the kind of hijacking of the action by irrational desire of the sort that Aristotle is envisaging here. See also n. 2 above.

³² An asterisk before the name or number of an item or claim, here and in what follows, indicates an item, claim or belief that we (and, as we claim, Socrates and Plato) reject.

³³ It would be somewhat unsystematic on the part of Aristotelians, Thomists and various moderns not to take the end also as merely the agent’s *apparent* maximal happiness. But the issue need not be raised here.

It is worth pausing here to recognize that with this retreat, for the case where the belief (BEL.) is false, from the really best means to the apparently best means, we are turning away from an actual means to a certain conception or description – a false appearance, in fact – of what the really best means is. The particular action that then results is the one that falls under this description or conception or appearance – *with no direct reference at all, included in that description or conception or appearance, to what is in fact the really best means*. According to the view that this is an appropriate retreat to make, it is enough, in order for us to be able to say that the agent *wanted* to do the action he or she did, that the agent *believed* the action best. Indeed, on the usual modern view – which, from the Socratic perspective, will be to ‘speak with the vulgar’ – the action the agent *thought* he or she wanted to do precisely *is* the action the agent wanted to do.³⁴

The reflection that if we are to speak with the vulgar, then the agent may no longer be said to desire the really best means, leads us to how Socrates speaks (in reaction to any such view) when he speaks in accordance with his deepest beliefs. What lies behind this Socratic mode of speaking is a very deep realism about the objects of psychological states. This realism, which lives on in Plato (for example, in such ideas as that of true and false pleasures which we find in both the *Republic* and the *Philebus*), imposes the requirement that what we and others are thinking about is *the real things that are there*: not things as they *appear* to us, à la Protagoras, but things as they *really are*, even if how they are is different from what we suppose them to be (or indeed different from how our language conceptualizes them). Thus Socrates denies that the agent ever stops desiring the really best means. In other words, he would repudiate any retreat from the really best means to the apparently best means. Instead he insists that the agent, in acting on the false belief, has *not* done the action he or she wanted to do, though he will say that the agent did what *seemed best* to him or her (the distinction so clearly laid out in *Gorgias* 466A–468E: see n. 29 above). It is only the action the agent wanted to do if the executive desire is the desire (EXDES.) to do the action which is the really best means to the agent’s maximal good. It follows that in Case 2, the executive desire which brought about the action is not (*EXDES./APP.), since that would involve Socrates’ retreating to the apparently best means. But neither is it (EXDES.) itself, since the action done

³⁴ This view – widely endorsed in one form or other ever since Aristotle, we have noted – is strongly reinforced by Protagoreanism in antiquity, and in modern philosophy by Cartesianism about our own inner states. (Under the description *D'*, since it requires the assent of the agent to the description, is – as a matter of fact – an invitation to Cartesianism: for example, to the doctrine that, at least in the simplest cases, I cannot fail to know what I believe, what I feel or what I desire.)

is not the really best means. What executive desire, then, could bring about the action that was in fact done?

This raises a crucial issue:³⁵ how the action ever took place at all, if the agent *did not want to do* the action he or she did. Neither Socrates nor Plato ever tells us how this question is to be answered – perhaps because the case of most immediate importance to them is the one involved in virtuous action, namely Case 1, the case where the agent's beliefs are true. But if we do not make the Aristotelian–Thomist–modern retreat from the real good to the apparent good, what are we to do?

In the absence of any answer in the Platonic text, Penner has constructed an account³⁶ which enables us to stick with desire for good as desire for the real good, while still allowing for the operation of an executive desire in producing the action – notwithstanding the fact that this new executive desire will not be a desire for the actual action done. There will be *another*, defective, sort of desire – which Plato might have called a ‘false desire’ – that will bring about the action which the agent did (though by Socratic convictions, he or she did not want to do it).

We get this other desire as follows: substitution into the desire (DES.) of the false belief (BEL.) that this action here and now is the really best means to fulfilling (DES.) should result in the following executive desire:

*EXDES./INC.³⁷ the desire to do this action here and now which is *both* the really best means to the agent's maximal happiness (maximal good) *and* the actual action done which the agent thinks to be the best means available (*though in fact it is not*).

It may be replied that there *is* no such action. But we grant that. It is just that the agent doesn't know there is no such action, so that he supposes there is. It is that false belief which creates, and is embedded in, the desire (EXDES./INC.). There is indeed an incoherence in this desire, as there is in the belief. The question is not whether there can be any such action, but only whether there can be a (defective sort of) desire to do such an action. We answer: yes.³⁸ The fact that there is no Santa Claus does not stop it being the case that some misguided child is waiting for Santa Claus. In just the same way the incoherent, defective executive desire (EXDES./INC.) brings about an action – this action here and now which the agent *thinks* to

³⁵ Antonio Chu's issue: see n. 29 above.

³⁶ First in print in Penner and Rowe 1994, 8–9, with n. 2 (pp. 1–2).

³⁷ ‘INC.’ for ‘incoherent’: see below.

³⁸ As is noted elsewhere, e.g. in Penner 2002, 208–9, n. 19, there is nothing particularly troubling for a philosopher of language in the idea of such an incoherence in an erring psychological state.

be the best means, even though it is not. This action, we submit, is not the action the agent wanted to do – whatever Aristotle, Aquinas, Anscombe or Davidson say. The agent wanted to do the action which was both this particular action *and also the action which constituted the really best means*. And there is no such action. *A fortiori*, the agent has not done the action he or she wanted to do.

Such is the view that we (Penner and Rowe) take of cases where the action the agent apparently wanted turned out not to be the best action available. On this view, to sum up (and repeat), Socrates will say, when speaking in accordance with his deepest convictions, that

soc. the agent did not want to do the action he or she did – the one that turned out not to maximize the agent's available happiness or good.
What is the evidence that this is how Socrates speaks when he is doing so in accordance with his deepest convictions? The evidence is not restricted to the passage in the *Gorgias* to which we have been appealing so far (466A–468E)³⁹ – and the message of which is surely irreproachable once one loses the idea that Plato is hopelessly confused (and/or the idea that the passage involves a special sense of 'want' – because what Plato says is inconsistent with what modern philosophers say). Penner and Rowe 1994 argues that the only way to understand *Meno* 77A–78B is to take it, too, as being in accordance with that view. That is, we propose, 'everyone desires the good' must be understood in the *Meno* too in terms of everyone desiring the *real* good, not the apparent good – though this has been doubted.⁴⁰ The same idea can be found in the *Republic*, at IX, 577D10–11: 'the tyrannical city least of all does what it wants to do', says Socrates there, a clear enough allusion to the *Gorgias* discussion (or the idea it advances). But most importantly, the idea in question is contained in the famous dictum 'No one errs willingly,' when this is filled out – as it must be – as 'No one errs willingly <sc. at getting what is best for oneself>.' No one errs willingly at *this*: such is the claim, notwithstanding the usual view (e.g. Aristotle's), that people frequently, and quite willingly or voluntarily, do actions that turn out not to be best for them – either by virtue of the action's flowing from a (mistaken) rational desire (wish), or by its flowing from an appetitive desire – so that actions of both sorts are (on this Aristotelian, Thomist, modern view) willing (voluntary). Contrary to this more usual view, what we find not only in Plato's early dialogues, but also in late dialogues like the *Laws*,⁴¹ is

³⁹ See n. 29, and §2, above.

⁴⁰ E.g. by Mariana Anagnostopoulos in Reshotko 2003: 171–91; cf. also Anagnostopoulos' doctoral dissertation at the University of California, Irvine, 2001.

⁴¹ This appearance of 'No one errs willingly' in the *Laws* used to puzzle one of us (Penner) since he thought that 'No one errs willingly' should be quintessentially Socratic, and not Platonic. Here he

still that no one errs willingly. What this tells us is that where an agent does action *A* and *A* is not the best action (so that one *erred* in one's action) then one did *not* do *A* willingly. So the only action done willingly is an action that is in fact beneficial. This is Plato's steady doctrine – when he is not 'speaking with the vulgar'⁴² – whether in Socratic or Platonic parts of the corpus.

So there is ample evidence outside *Gorgias* 466A–468E for the view that according to Socrates, and Plato (where they are not speaking with the vulgar, but rather in their own person),

NACT. No one ever wanted to do an action he or she did which did not maximize the available real happiness or good.⁴³

was too influenced by the assumption that Plato thought of voluntary action in the way Aristotle did, so that Plato, like Aristotle, should allow that one does often err willingly (voluntarily) when an action flows from irrational desire after the manner described in n. 2 above. But if Plato continues to have even the Athenian Stranger affirm (at *Laws* ix, 860c–861d) that no one errs willingly, then he too must be supposing that in any case where any particular action *A* does not in fact maximize the agent's available real happiness or good, the agent does not willingly (voluntarily) do *A*. (If there is any other available basis for the claim, we – Penner and Rowe – do not see what it is.)

This is an example of how careful we need to be in putting Plato's thought in modern terms. It is a complete misrepresentation of Plato to say that Plato, in agreement with Aristotle (and contrary to the view of Socrates, where there are no irrational voluntary acts), holds that actions proceeding from irrational desires are also voluntary. What is true here is that Plato agrees with Aristotle that the *goodness or badness of individuals may be judged from actions that proceed from irrational desires* (where Socrates will disagree, since he does not think there are any such actions). What is *not* true is that Plato holds that any such actions are voluntary (willing). As we have just said, Plato does not even hold that actions issuing from the rational part of the soul, but based upon false beliefs, are voluntary. This is all a consequence, not of anything that is different between Socrates and Plato – so that we would need to wonder how the Socratic 'No one errs willingly' can still appear in the *Laws* – but rather of the view that if an act turns out not to maximize the agent's available real happiness or good, then the agent did not want to do it. This is the view we have been identifying in the main text as the view that reflects Socrates' deepest convictions about human motivation. Those particular convictions remain in the thought of the mature Plato, in spite of his acceptance of a parts-of-the-soul doctrine. (This, incidentally, resolves the crux at *Republic* vi, 505D10–506A4, where it is said that we all, always, pursue the good – as if Plato thinks that no one ever pursues what he or she is led to by irrational desires! 'Pursue' here – as we ourselves for the most part failed to see up till now – is simply to be understood as 'willingly pursue' – an understanding that is surely natural enough in itself. See Rowe forthcoming, a preliminary essay on the *Republic* passage in question.)

⁴² So e.g. in the *Lysis*, when Socrates simply allows that Lysis wants to do things that his parents see will be harmful to him (207D–210D), he is speaking with the vulgar – drawing out consequences of how the boy *Lysis* sees desire. (As elsewhere in the present book, we – Penner and Rowe – feel not the slightest embarrassment about supposing that Plato and the Socrates of the *Lysis* want to say the same things. That is, we hold, perhaps in current terms unfashionably, that the Socrates of the *Lysis* is Plato's *portavoce*; and even a splendid book like Blondell 2002 has not inclined us towards any shift of position on the issue.)

⁴³ Another clear illustration of this view of Plato's may be seen in the discussion of the willing and unwilling discarding of beliefs at *Republic* iii, 412E10–413C3. The only case of willingly discarding a belief is the case of discarding a false belief. Any case of discarding a true belief for a false one is taken to be *unwilling* (412E11–413A1). The discarding of a true belief for a false one occurs in three ways – by theft (by being persuaded otherwise, or by forgetting), by bewitchment (by pleasure) and by compulsion (by fear). The key point in the passage is that no one willingly believes something false. But then neither can anyone willingly do an action flowing from a false belief.

This remarkable approach to what we *want* to do, as we have already made clear enough, has parallels in Socratic/Platonic thought concerning what people believe and what people refer to.⁴⁴

To sum up on our proposal as to how Socrates *would have* handled Case 2 when he is speaking in accordance with his deepest beliefs: we admit that there is nothing like (EXDES./INC.) in the text of Plato. But at the same time we are not aware of any other workable proposals as to how it can be the case that all three of the following are true together:

- A. no one errs willingly in (what Aristotle will call) voluntary action, and that
- B. no agent ever wanted to do an action he or she did which ended up being harmful to him or her,
- and yet
- C. the agent in some way *opted to do* the action.

So in advance of the production of some other account of how we are to deal with such claims, we shall assume that the present account embodied in (EXDES./INC.) is along the right lines.

A few remarks now about the belief (BEL.) that this action here and now realizes the best means, and so is the really best action. This belief does not just come out of the blue, but is the product of a deliberation that involves – either as explicit premisses or as background assumptions – at least the following sorts of beliefs, in the agent:

- BEL.1. general beliefs about the human good;
- BEL.2. general beliefs from sciences other than the science of the good, e.g. medicine, sailing, carpentry, farming and so forth;
- BEL.3. general beliefs about the agent and his or her circumstances; and
- BEL.4. particular beliefs about the agent and his or her circumstances.

Of these beliefs, we shall say that general beliefs about the good, of the sort (BEL.1), are beliefs about the means to happiness of a *higher level* than any of the other beliefs, since these general beliefs about the good are most likely to show up over a wide range of deliberations. Thus, within those general beliefs about the good and means to the good, the belief that the happiness of one's children is important to one's own happiness is a higher-level belief about means to one's own happiness than the belief that having a car or a stereo is important to that happiness – the cars and stereos just getting into considerations of the good because of special features of one's particular circumstances. (The basic idea here is that the happiness of one's children – and one's friends – are means that are present, at least implicitly,

⁴⁴ This is what we call the 'principle of real reference': see §2 above.

in practically all one's deliberations, being more like major premisses in the account of means, while cars, stereos and the like are present only by virtue of minor premisses that speak to other less general desiderata.) We might indeed speak of children, parents and friends as 'at very nearly the highest level of means to our happiness'.⁴⁵

Turning now more generally to (BEL.1)–(BEL.4) – beliefs of the sorts that we have suggested are involved in the production of the belief (BEL.) as to which particular action is the really best means to one's maximal good – we claim that there is hardly a belief in the agent's *entire web of belief* that is not either actually involved or potentially involved in deriving the identification, in (BEL.), of the action which constitutes the best means currently available to the agent's maximal available good. For any expression that occurs in (BEL.) – such as 'good', 'health', 'friend', 'love' and so forth – will implicitly evoke dissonance or consonance with higher level beliefs about the kinds *good, health, friends* and so forth.⁴⁶ And each obstacle or opportunity that presents itself in new perceptions of the situation at the

⁴⁵ The significance of this point will emerge later with respect to some apparent counter-examples to what we shall offer as the Socratic account of love. (See Chapter 11 below, e.g. n. 63.)

⁴⁶ Suppose that the beliefs in Penner's belief-structure to which he appeals in deciding to go and shovel his grandmother's sidewalk after a snowstorm include the bad effects on the health of older people of certain sorts of strenuous activity, the heaviness of the snow in this snowstorm, the good to Penner of his grandmother staying healthy (his love for her), the conflicting schedule of ice-hockey practice, his chances at an athletic scholarship, and so on. Then from these and other beliefs, he may conclude that all things considered it will be best for him to get over to his grandmother's house as soon as possible to beat her to the shovel, and thus to miss hockey practice. In that case, the action he is doing is identified by the totality of those beliefs, organized into the argument-structure he gives to them in deciding that this is the best action. The action is that action (he believes) that is best for him in the circumstances: the action of shovelling the recent heavy snow that will preserve his grandmother's health, her health being an important part of his own good, even though it means missing hockey practice, and so forth. It will then be easy to see how the sorts of considerations invoked above bring in such higher-level considerations as that of the good. For with the considerations of hockey practice and an athletic scholarship conflicting with other considerations, we must appeal to wider considerations of good, health, love and the like in order to decide on the action that is to be preferred.

That 'and so forth' – in the list, three sentences back, of the beliefs that entered into Penner's particular decision on the action to be done – is required because we do not have the action properly identified unless we have accounted for *every* consideration that, explicitly or implicitly, plays a role in our reasoning. Take another case. Jack murders Peter. The fact that the law-courts, in condemning Jack for this particular action, disregard many of these beliefs (the 'whole story', so to speak), provided only that certain conditions laid down in the law for first-degree murder are satisfied – their satisfaction being sufficient for condemnation – shows only what St Augustine said long ago: that the law is for sinful man while only God sees the truth because only He sees into men's hearts. All the law cares about is that the action – whatever the rest of the story about it – is *voluntary under the description* 'guilty in the first degree of murdering Peter'. (Both Anscombe and Davidson insist upon this idea of actions being voluntary under a description.) This is to say that the law *does not care* exactly what action was done – except to the extent that it falls under the conditions for legal responsibility for a particular law-defined crime. Similar remarks might be made about many (deontological) moral theories. What we are suggesting is that knowing what action was done requires knowing *all* the beliefs that played into arriving at belief (BEL.).

moment, and accordingly calls for fine-tuning of our selection of action, will require us to assess the relevance of new kinds to kinds already in our web of belief – to a few that are relatively more specific, and probably to most of the higher-level kinds. And the relevance of new kinds will in turn prompt the need for new examination of the particular circumstances of the situation.⁴⁷

Looked at from another point of view, what is explicitly involved in any particular deliberation may be fairly slight – e.g., there may be little more than the (surely nevertheless necessary) identification of this person here as someone who is loved and who is in need in a particular way. (We can hardly do without *this* much that is reasonably explicit.)⁴⁸ Even so, this deliberating will take place against a background that potentially includes all of my beliefs of all four kinds above, i.e. (BEL.1)–(BEL.4). For even if I act fairly straightforwardly and without much explicit thought, I am at least supposing that there is nothing in the rest of my beliefs of a sort that would make it better to delay action for purposes of further consideration; and *that* is, implicitly, making a judgement that involves my entire web of belief.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ In the first example in the preceding note, the presence of a university coach at this particular hockey practice, and the availability (or unavailability) of Penner's mother's car to get him more quickly from his grandmother's to practice, may both force reassessments – again leading to considerations of overall good. The essential point here is that practical reasoning, like Socratic theoretical reasoning that attempts to identify such things as justice, courage and the like, is essentially *dialectical*. We don't start with our most general beliefs and then plug in particular circumstances. Rather, what more general beliefs turn out to be relevant will change as we learn more about our particular circumstances: see on Pentheus in n. 49 below. Just so, new knowledge of our particular circumstances will show new kinds as relevant, and so prompt an interest in new generalities – and so on, till the costs of further deliberation are greater than the good of deciding now. (In this respect, we find much to agree with in Wiggins 1980.)

⁴⁸ A mother does not rush to save her child *purely on instinct*, whatever those with a sentimental regard for the power of maternal instinct may say. The particular action will hardly take place unless the mother comes to believe (a) that there is a child in the situation that is in a certain sort of distress, e.g. drowning, in pain, feeling threatened; and (b) that the child in question is *hers*. The love in question is a love intellectually directed at a particular child in a particular relation to this woman in particular circumstances. It cannot thus be *purely instinctual* – not unless perceptual beliefs about a situation one faces (in all its particularities) could themselves be *purely instinctual* (indefinitely many instincts?!). We (Penner and Rowe) take it that the loving motive is the desire to save this child in this relation to the woman in these circumstances. We do not countenance a division of labour between purely instinctual (undirected) love-of-child and directed desire to do such an act. For an indication of our reasons, see n. 50 below; and more generally on what we shall call 'brute' desires (to be introduced shortly below), Chapter 11, §6 below.

⁴⁹ Take the case of Pentheus in Euripides' *Bacchae*, deciding what to do with Dionysus once he has captured him. Pentheus' initial decision to throw Dionysus into prison does not explicitly consider the question of a scouting party to see what he, Pentheus, is up against with these orgies up on the mountain. But it is surely fair to say that he thinks he has considered what he needs to consider in order to decide to throw Dionysus into prison. So it is, at that point, an 'all things considered' judgement to throw Dionysus into prison. But when Dionysus brings up the question of just

So much, then, for purposes of introducing Socratic intellectualism as we understand it. Several consequences of this way of understanding action are worth singling out here. Take first the fact that Socratic intellectualism generates all action from the single desire, common to everyone, for his or her own maximal available happiness or good over the rest of his or her life – or, in the present version, for whatever particular action may constitute the best means currently available to his or her own maximum available happiness or good over the rest of his or her life. One very striking consequence of this is an utter rejection of the perspective involved in Plato's parts of the soul doctrine (as also in Aristotle's psychology of action, following Plato's). According to that doctrine, some actions of the sort Aristotle would call voluntary (cf. n. 41 above) proceed *not* from any generalized desire for the good at all, but from brute irrational desires such as those for drink, food, sex and so forth – desires that involve no reference whatever to the good.

This particular Platonic–Aristotelian belief-desire psychology offers explanations of the following sort (we here pick up and develop material already in n. 2 above):

- (i) pick any brute – irrational, good-independent – desire such as thirst; then
 - (ii) find a belief as to where there is some available liquid that will satisfy that desire;
- then
- (iii) the action of availing oneself of that liquid will result.

Here, it is alleged, we have a belief-desire explanation of a particular act, where the desire-half of the explanation is a brute irrational desire. The reasons why we (Penner and Rowe) believe Socrates would have rejected this particular version of belief-desire psychology are to be found at Penner 1990.⁵⁰ Here we wish only to make clear that Socratic intellectualism has

such a scouting party, with an explicit appeal to military intelligence and an unstated appeal to Pentheus' prurient interest in these orgies, Pentheus adjusts his deliberations immediately to such considerations, and makes a new 'all things considered' judgement. In Gill (forthcoming), Penner speaks about this process as *tracing a pathway through one's web of belief*.

⁵⁰ The argument, in brief, is this: that an action cannot be generated purely as a result of the co-occurrence of *this* belief and *this* desire, since in general we will have *many* beliefs and *many* desires – on whatever principle of counting we employ for beliefs and desires. Suppose there are six other beliefs and seven other desires. Then from the co-occurrence of these six beliefs and seven desires there might be as many as forty-one *other* actions brought about simultaneously with the one that is supposed to be explained from *this* belief and *this* desire. Since that is evidently impossible, some further explanation besides simple co-occurrence will be what is needed of just why *this* belief and *this* desire get to be the pair that generates the actual action done. What is needed is not co-occurrence, but some *integration* of a relevant belief and a relevant desire. We have explained this integration above (through the substitution of a particular belief about what is best into a generalized desire for whatever is best). In his O'Neil Memorial Lectures, Penner has argued that there are similar difficulties

a perfectly good alternative account of acting out of a desire for drink, in which the desire-half of the belief-desire pair that generates the action is not the good-independent desire for drink in the schema above, but *the generalized desire for good*. The account runs as follows:

- (iv) a particular thirst occurs;
- (v) that thirst is *represented* in a *belief* as to the contribution that satisfying that thirst would make to the agent's overall good;
- (vi) that belief is incorporated into the totality of beliefs in terms of which the agent decides which particular action now available constitutes the really best means to the agent's maximal happiness over a complete life;
- (vii) the resulting belief as to which action is best – in this case, an action in which one drinks – coalesces with the generalized desire for good, and produces the executive desire to do this particular action of drinking.

There is thus no need for actions generated by belief-desire pairs in which a brute appetite like thirst constitutes the desire-half of the belief-desire pair. (In the schema just presented, the way thirst appears is not in the desire-half of the explanation, but *as represented in the belief-half*.) We are not saying that this appetite of thirst does not occur physiologically, nor are we saying that our perception of it fails to awaken our thought about what to do. Indeed we insist that it *does* do just this, as much as perception of any large rock put in our pathway would awaken our thought about which way to walk. The point is simply that the thirst does not function as the desire-half of a belief-desire explanation.⁵¹

Now for a second consequence of Socratic intellectualism. From the fact that all actions are generated by a single generalized desire, we get that good people do not differ from bad people because of any difference in fundamental desire, i.e. what we have labelled as (DES.): the desire for *whatever action may be* the best means currently available to me, in the circumstances I am in, and so on. That is, good people will not differ from bad people because of any difference in fundamental desire as that fundamental desire is *before* the substitution into (DES.) of the belief (BEL.) as to which particular action will be best for the agent.⁵² The result is that any

for the stock Butler–Hume–Sidgwick–Broad–Feinberg–Nagel arguments for the possibility of pure altruism. (We are not saying that this exhausts the possibilities for a defender of pure altruism. The point for the moment is just that the Platonic–Aristotelian options fail.)

⁵¹ See *preceding note*.

⁵² See n. 30 above, and text to n. 30. We need to make the distinction in question – between the desire as it is before the decision to do just this particular act has been taken, and the desire as it is once the belief that this particular act is the really best means available has been substituted in – because of our decision to declare that there is an identity through change involving the desire to do whatever means is best and the desire to do the action which is in fact the best. Cf. also *Meno* 78a6–8.

differences there are between people in their actions – aside from their being different individuals – must come from differences in beliefs of the sorts (BEL.1)–(BEL.4), from which the belief (BEL.) is derived, this belief (BEL.) then coalescing with the fundamental desire (DES.), and turning it into the relevant agent-particular executive desire (EXDES.). This is what allows the possibility of explaining how knowledge might come to be identified as the ultimate good that everyone desires and loves – the ‘first friend’. For knowledge alone assuredly secures the happiness that is the object of the fundamental desire (DES.). (Dumb luck is not going to be a real possibility in a complex world.)

There is presumably no need to add, third, that this account of the psychology of voluntary action also explains the extreme urgency of the remark that *the unexamined life is not worth living* (Socrates at *Apology* 38A5–6). For it is one’s beliefs alone that make a difference to whether one does better or worse in the actions one chooses to do. Hence, in terms of what we aim at in action, there is no difference between the course of action which aims at the happiness available in these circumstances and the course of action that aims at the knowledge that is appropriate to this situation. (This identity or near-identity between seeking happiness and seeking knowledge will reappear crucially in the penultimate section of Chapter II below.)

Fourth, the account we have given of Socratic intellectualism will allow us to explain why it is, given that *philia* and *erōs* are motives for acting in particular ways, and that all action is *via* desire for the ultimate good, that *philia* and *erōs* must in every case be understood in terms of an underlying desire for good that is present in all actions (i.e. the ultimate good; the ‘first friend’). Hence we have also made it possible to explain how it is that *philia* and *erōs* are each species of desire for good – and indeed species of desire for the agent’s *own* good. The fundamental desire underlying Socratic intellectualism is explicitly egoistic (*psychologically* egoistic, not *ethically* egoistic); and this in turn will explain why the accounts of *philia* and *erōs* which we attribute to the *Lysis* are (*psychologically*) egoistic.

From this fourth point flows a fifth, one which shows some of the commitments we – Penner and Rowe – make in this discussion. This is that on our account, desire for good, *philia*, and *erōs* are all to be understood and to be judged in terms of *action* – in terms of what people *do* rather than simply in terms of what they *feel*. (After all, we have been explaining Socratic intellectualism as a psychology of action.) This point should not be turned into any kind of endorsement of behaviourism – since it is central to identifying what an action *is*, on the Socratic view, *what inferences* from *what beliefs* go into that belief-structure that generates the crucial belief (BEL.) that in turn

identifies the action in question. This is no simple behaviourism, treating internal belief-structure as a kind of permanently sealed black box (and deriving what beliefs someone has from how they behave, rather than, as in Socrates, deriving what behaviour has occurred from what the agents involved believe). Nonetheless, feelings *not* acted on, or which *play no part* in generating actions are, on this account, highly marginalized. This will disturb those who want to insist, ‘Love is about how I *feel*, don’t you see?’ Such protesters are missing the real issue. The real issue is not the existence of feelings, but the existence and importance of feelings *not at all influential on anything we do* – even on our *deliberations* (which are, after all, also actions) – and the question how the Socratic account relates what we call ‘feelings’ to beliefs and actions. For most such ‘feelings’ *are* intimately connected with beliefs and actions. Indeed, it is hard to imagine a feeling that does not somehow influence some belief the subject has – only recall our treatment of particular thirsts in (iv)–(vii) above. But it is surely clear that there is no belief that is not capable of influencing action – given the kind of dialectically holistic procedure deliberation actually is. So we feel perfectly free simply to ignore the supposed existence of feelings not at all influential on anything we do.

* * * *

So much, then, by way of preparing the reader for a second trip through the *Lysis* (Chapter 11 below). We have warned the reader, first, that we shall be employing somewhat different assumptions about what is involved in Socratic dialectic from those employed by those who impose on the dialogues the rules of the so-called ‘Socratic elenchus’ (and that we expect thereby to gain a much greater unity for the *Lysis* as a whole); second, that we shall be identifying the ‘first friend’ – the sole ultimate good sought in all love or friendship, all *being in love*, and all desire – as a certain knowledge or wisdom; third, that both love (friendship) and being in love will be identified as species of that desire for good; and, fourth, that the desire for good – especially when we see it in its generalized form – will turn out (a) to be the origin of all voluntary action whatever, and (b) to be identical with the desire for the agent’s *own* good.

CHAPTER II

A re-reading of the Lysis

I Socrates talks to Hippothales, then Lysis and Menexenus, then Lysis by himself (203a–210d)

The *Lysis* begins when Socrates is brought together with a group of young men, one of whom, Hippothales, is in love with one of a number of beautiful boys who are also present, namely Lysis. This introduces a *first subject-matter* of the *Lysis*: *erōs* (being in love, erotic love, sexual passion). Socrates quickly turns one of the questions he addresses to the lover Hippothales, namely ‘Who is the favoured beauty?’ (204bi–2) into the question ‘How should a lover speak to his darling?’¹ Socrates’ answer to this question, as it soon

¹ The argument that *erōs* is a main subject-matter of the *Lysis* resides in the way in which the dialogue is framed by the discussion of *erōs*. (This notwithstanding the fact that, as we point out in note 3, the dialogue is also framed by the discussion of *philia*.)

As we saw in Part I, the *Lysis* begins (205a9–b3, 205d5–206c7) with a question about *erōs* to which it implicitly returns very near the end (221e7–222b2), about the correct way for a lover to speak to his darling. Socrates puts forward the suggestion that the lover should not praise and otherwise puff up the darling, but rather check him; take him down a peg; and – this is the form which Socrates’ check takes – make him realize that he needs knowledge. If we take this species of check, having to do with knowledge and wisdom, as the one sort that Socrates thinks needs to be employed in speaking to one’s darling, then the upshot of this illustration of how to talk to your darling may reasonably be taken to be – as it is at *Euthydemus* 282a1–b7 (cf. *Phaedrus* 239a4–c2, in Socrates’ first speech, and 249a2 in his second speech) – that (i) the darling will come to see that he *should* give in to the right kind of lover, and that (ii) the genuine lover in question is the lover who will help the darling to gain the knowledge and wisdom he needs.

Such, then, is the front part of the *Lysis*. Turning now to the way the *Lysis* ends, we find at 222a6–7, within a Stephanus page of the end, that what Socrates says is exactly what we find in the *Euthydemus*: that the darling should give in to the genuine and not pretended lover. We have already noted (Part I, Chapter 6) that Socrates is the only real candidate for being the genuine and not the pretended lover referred to in this last passage. The genuine lover is precisely *not* the ridiculous Hippothales, for all his colouring with pleasure at the thought that Socrates is talking about him (222b2 with 210e1–211a1). But the reason why it is Socrates and not Hippothales who is the genuine lover is that it is Socrates who will, by his conversation (questioning, examination) awaken in the darling the desire for knowledge and wisdom.

We see, then, that the core of the dialogue (including its central argument) is framed by passages making it clear that the subject-matter of the dialogue at the very least includes *erōs*, and how best to talk to one’s darling.

emerges (206AI–C7, 210EI–5), is in effect ‘Don’t sing his praises, and so puff him up. Instead, take him down a peg.’ Socrates is subtle enough not to carry the banter on the lover’s strategy so far as to make it explicit that Kn1. the *only* way in which one should take the darling down a peg is by showing the darling that he needs knowledge.

Nevertheless, we take this to be the clear purport of the opening section of the dialogue (203AI–206D6), when this is taken together with the questioning of Lysis at 207D5–210D8 that serves as an illustration of the strategy Socrates recommends for a lover.²

Lysis and Menexenus, another beautiful boy, now appear on the scene. Their friendship for each other prompts Socrates to question the two on various attributes relevant to their friendship: their age, birth, beauty, wealth, and – though he does not quite get to ask them about *this* – their justice and wisdom (207B8–D2). Menexenus is called away; and, in a passage that is frequently rather badly misread, Socrates questions Lysis about his parents’ love (*philia*) for him. This introduces a *second subject-matter* of the dialogue: *philia*, normally – and frequently within this dialogue – translated ‘friendship’, but in fact, as the present context in the *Lysis* shows, including love between parents and children as well as love between friend and friend. This – *philia* – is, indeed, the *ostensible* subject-matter of the dialogue, and in any case a more central subject-matter than *erōs*.³ But yet a

² The issue here is not what *proposition* Socrates wants to make true when he wants the sentence ‘The darling is taken down a peg’ to be true – since if it were, it would not be the proposition expressed by the sentence ‘The darling is taken down a peg by being shown he does not have knowledge.’ For (pursuant to the doctrine of the ‘logical powers’ of a sentence, characterized briefly at Chapter 10, n. 3 above), the two sentences, having different meanings, different inferability relations to other sentences, and different truth-conditions, must express different propositions. (One can’t infer the second from the first.) In our own contrasting view, the issue is not one of what *sentences* the lover is being said to want to be true, but rather the substantive issue of whether the state of affairs *Socrates* is singling out by means of the first sentence, in which the darling is taken down a peg *is* – and *is being taken by Socrates to be* – the state of affairs in which the darling is taken down a peg by being shown he lacks knowledge. Our concern, as remarked in Chapter 10, nn. 3, 6, 7, is not with what *sentences* say (even on a particular occasion), but with what *speakers* (Socrates or his interlocutors) say on a particular occasion.

³ Cf. n. 1 above. It is the friendship of Lysis and Menexenus for each other that, at 207B8–D2, introduces the first substantial argument of the dialogue (207D–210D: the very argument that will illustrate how to put a check on Lysis). Socrates’ questioning of the two young friends about their relationship is just about to get to the question who is the wiser and more just of the two when Menexenus is called away, setting up the questioning of Lysis. (As we noted in Part I, Chapter 1, the fact that Socrates was just getting around to *wisdom* is significant, Lysis’ need for wisdom being also the upshot of the argument that immediately follows.) In this questioning, which constitutes the first argument of the dialogue, *philia* is now treated more in terms of the love of parents for their children than in terms of the love of friends for each other. There is in fact no reason, for the moment, to suppose that, beyond any difference between parents and a friend, there is any difference to the loving relationship. For example, we may surely suppose that Socrates thinks that both parents and friends seek Lysis’ happiness. Indeed, lovers also *philein* the darling and so want him to be happy. In any case it is still *philia* that is dominating the discussion, even in the argument with Lysis about his parents’ love for

third main subject-matter of the *Lysis* – the desire for good – surfaces later in the dialogue.

That said, we need to make it clear that the subject-matter in question is actually narrower than our description of it as *philia* may suggest. For talk of friendship and of love between parents and children suggests an interest in friends' being friends to *each other*, and in loving *each other*. However important that interest may be to Aristotle⁴ and to modern philosophers, it is not Plato's main interest in the *Lysis* – or, as it happens, in the *Symposium* or *Phaedrus*. Indeed he hardly seems to be interested in it at all. The interest in the *Lysis* is only in the one-way relation given by 'x loves (*philein*) y', not in the two-way relation given by 'x and y love (*philein*) each other'. If readers are not clear about this, they will be utterly mystified by the near-identity the dialogue comes to affirm between *philia*, *erōs* and what we have just referred to as a *third subject-matter* of the dialogue besides *erōs* and *philia*, namely, that of *desire for good*. For, on any account, desire for good – like desire for happiness – can only be a one-way relation. It is indeed particularly clearly a one-way relation in the *Lysis*, where, as we shall argue (to add to the case already made in Part I), it is the relation given by 'the neither good nor bad loves the ultimate good'.

The ostensible result of Socrates' questioning of Lysis about the love of his parents for him is that he convinces Lysis that

*Kn2.⁵ Lysis' parents will not love him if he is useless and does not have knowledge.

From this, Socrates infers that

Kn3. Lysis needs to get out there and strive for knowledge wherever he can find it – even if in a lover.⁶

Vlastos 1969 misreads the conclusion that Lysis' parents won't love him if he is useless and does not have knowledge. This misreading – already referred

him, and about the need for wisdom in the one who is loved. Then when Menexenus returns, Socrates begins the second argument of the dialogue, this time conducted between himself and Menexenus, by making explicit the theme of *getting a friend*. More exactly, the theme is Socrates' wish to come to be in the enviable state in which Lysis and Menexenus stand to each other, when, as things are, Socrates is so far from having a friend that he doesn't even know how one person comes to be a friend to another (212a4–6). Here we have, then, the front end of another framing that Plato gives to the core of the dialogue.

But now, this beginning we discover in the first two arguments of the dialogue concerning *philia* is matched by the way the dialogue ends. For at the very end of the dialogue (223b3–8), Socrates says to the two boys that the *three* of them are ridiculous, because they all believe they are friends with each other – Socrates now counts himself in with the boys – and yet they have not yet been able to discover *what a friend is*. (*Knowing about friendship* is, once more, apparently important to *being friends*. We shall return to the part played by knowledge in friendship.)

⁴ See e.g. *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII.1, 1155b32–1156a5.

⁵ Once more, an asterisk indicates an item Socrates/Plato (on our view) rejects.

⁶ It is important to us – see Chapter 2, pp. 31–3 above, and, text to n. 11 below – that in spite of the fact that (Kn3) is inferred from the rejected (*Kn2), Socrates nevertheless thinks we must accept (Kn3).

to in Chapter 10, §3 above – resembles misreadings given by many others (our past selves included), who find in this part of the *Lysis* the implication that parental love is always only self-interested – and indeed, as Vlastos expresses it, crassly selfish (though we ourselves take selfishness to be quite other than self-interest).⁷

True, we concede to Vlastos that, on our account of the *Lysis*, parental love *is* always self-interested – simply because in the Socratic psychology of action ('Socratic intellectualism', as sketched in Chapter 10, §4 above), *all* desire that results in voluntary action is self-interested. So all the actions of parents will in this way be self-interested. But there is nothing at all in the way in which the present argument with Lysis is conducted that appeals to that claim. In any case, we have shown (Part I, Chapter 2, §3, culminating in n. 61) that Vlastos has mistaken Socrates' argumentative strategy. The conclusion (*Kn2) that your parents will love you only if you have knowledge is not being asserted by Socrates *in propria persona*, as Vlastos implies, but constitutes the absurd conclusion of a *reductio ad absurdum* of the premisses from which the examination of Lysis began. These are, first, a principle embodying what we have, somewhat discursively, called the 'childish' conception of happiness:

*CHH. Happiness is doing whatever you want (understood here as doing what you may *think* you want);⁸

and, second, a premiss embodying the view (which, if freed from infection by the childish conception of happiness, we would take to be perfectly true, if still somewhat incompletely specified) that

LOVE. If *x* loves *y*, then *x* desires that *y* be benefited, and so be happy.⁹

The childish conception of happiness together with the account of love in terms of wanting *y* to be happy gets us the result that if

- i. the parents think something Lysis desires to do (or thinks he desires to do) will harm him because he doesn't know what exactly he is doing in such an action, and, as a result, they don't let him do it,
then

⁷ On selfishness and self interest, see nn. 25 and 26 to Chapter 10 above.

⁸ See Chapter 10, §4 above on want and desire (properly understood – that is, understood in accordance with Socrates' deepest convictions). In the terminology of our account of *Gorgias* 466A–468E, the 'childish' conception of happiness is doing whatever *seems best* to you. Thus the reference to *doing whatever you want* involves what we have called 'speaking with the vulgar'.

⁹ Notice the absence of any reference to desiring things 'for their own sake' of the sort that is present in Vlastos' account (vl.1) discussed in Chapter 10, §3 above. Notice too that we are not saying that all desire to benefit someone flows from love. We consider cases where the desire to benefit someone does not flow from love below, n. 63. Also, we are not saying that there is some one view of love had both by children and by those who deny the childish conception of love. On the contrary, what a conception of love amounts to will differ according to what view is taken of happiness in that conception. But to say there is this difference of conception is not to say that both conceptions are not attempting to refer to the real nature of love. See Chapter 10 above, e.g. n. 3, and §2 *passim*.

- *2. in not letting Lysis do what he wants (or thinks he wants), they show that they don't want him to be happy, and so don't love him.

Without the childish conception of happiness, we can see why

3. only when Lysis is acting with knowledge of what he is doing (and of what will benefit or harm him) will his parents allow him to do whatever he wants (or thinks he wants).

This comports with a truer view of what happiness is than we find in the childish conception, and is fully compatible with the claim in (LOVE) that if x loves y , then x wants y to be happy.

Quite evidently, it would be wrong simply on the basis of the argument so far to suppose that Socrates is committed to the conclusion of the *reductio* that his parents don't love him if he doesn't have knowledge,¹⁰ rather than to the rejection of the childish conception of happiness. It is true that Plato gives no explicit indication that Socrates intends this argument as a *reductio* of that conception of happiness. But we are inclined to reject canons of interpretation that would measure Socrates' intentions merely by his explicit statements. For we know that such views of what happiness is are under attack in other Socratic passages from Plato's dialogues. Consider just the powerful parallel argument of the *Gorgias* at 466A–468E, a passage already referred to on several occasions in Chapter 10 above, and to be discussed in more detail in §7 below: that passage where Socrates contrasts doing *what one wants* with *doing whatever merely seems best to one* (whatever one thinks one wants), and where he argues that power is only the ability to do what you want – the ability to do what you think you want – when, for example, you know what is best for you; not the ability to do what you think you want *tout court*. So too here

- Kn4. Happiness is being able to do whatever you think you desire only when you act with knowledge of what you are doing, and especially with knowledge of what will benefit or harm you.

We grant that the fact that Socrates is not committed to the conclusion of the *reductio* (that Lysis' parents do not love him) implies that he is also not committed to the argument that is supposed to be deflating Lysis by showing that he needs to seek knowledge. In Chapter 2, however, we already noticed the irony that

- Kn5. once the childish conception of happiness is replaced by the more correct account in terms of doing whatever you think you want *when you do so with knowledge*, we recover, from that replacement, the very claim (Kn3) Socrates needs if he is to deflate Lysis, namely, that Lysis

¹⁰ It is to just this conclusion that we see Vlastos rushing – as, alas we (Penner and Rowe) also once did – in order to make something of the parents' concern for their self-interest.

needs to seek knowledge – to get out there and strive for knowledge wherever he can find it, even in a lover.

That is, Socrates' deflation of Lysis is secure against the replacement of the childish conception of happiness by a better account of happiness.¹¹

So far so good, though before we pass on to the next part of the argument, the 'Menexenus discussion', we re-emphasize (see above) that the discussion with Lysis is not about any mutual two-way love between Lysis' parents and Lysis. It is merely about the one-way love of the parents for their son Lysis (as it is also indirectly about the one-way passion of Hippothales for Lysis). When we come to the argument with Menexenus, the limitation to one-way *philia* is explicit.

2 THE MENEXENUS DISCUSSION (211A–213D)

The puzzling question that starts off this equally puzzling stretch of argument is

Q1. When *x* loves (*philein*) *y*, who is the friend (*philos*): *x*? Or *y*? Or both? We suggested in Part I that what is going on in this examination of one-way *philia* is that Socrates is searching for an account of 'x loves (*philein*) *y*' that will cover all cases whatever; a search that will, in the end, get us the conclusion, amongst other things, that the only true and real friend is the ultimate good (the 'first friend'). Here it is natural to say, 'Well, that's a funny way to get to that conclusion.' We grant it; and at the same time, it must be granted on all hands that the argument is a strange one. The only question, therefore, is, we submit: what will give us the simplest, clearest explanation of the detail of this strange argument, consistent with its place in the dialogue as a whole? On our account, there is a relatively clear and simple account if just two assumptions be granted – both of which can, we think be defended as Socratic in provenance, and the more difficult of which can be defended from within the *Lysis*. The two assumptions in question, already stated in Chapter 3 above, are these:

A1. People never love those who hate them and will harm them, and

A2. If we want a general account of *what is loved*, that account must leave it possible to love things that do not love back – horses and dogs (on the assumption that not all loved horses and dogs love their owners back), as well as wine, exercise and wisdom.

¹¹ This fulfils the implicit promise of n. 6 above.

In the latter assumption, (A2), it is as if we see the ‘What is *X*? question being taken as the question ‘What is the beloved?’ – and it is a reasonable enough assumption if it is reasonable to require a *general* account of *what is loved*. It is the former assumption, (A1), that tends to be troubling – for two different kinds of cases. Case I: *x* loves *y* in ignorance of the fact that *y* will harm *x*. Case II: *x* ‘blindly’ (foolishly) loves *y* in full knowledge that *y* may harm *x* (some people being just built to love in these circumstances – having what we have described as a ‘brute love’ for certain persons they know will harm them).

If we suppose the presence of these two assumptions, in fact we shall have to hand, in the discussion of the poets and cosmologists immediately following, an explanation for their truth that is simultaneously an explanation which will (ultimately) lead to the doctrine of the ‘first friend’. We are thinking here of the claim that

LOVE/G. the good is the only thing loved; and it is loved because of the benefit it brings¹² – at any rate, to those who are not self-sufficient (i.e. to those who are in need of further benefit),

and the counterpart claim that

HATE/B. The bad is universally hated, even by the bad, because of the harm it brings.

These claims suggest the following claim about those that hate:

HATE/D. If *y* hates *x*, then *y* desires the bad for *x*, and hence desires that *x* be harmed, and unhappy.

And from this claim we get that

LOVE/DH. If *x* were to love *y*, when *y* hates *x* and will harm *x*,¹³ then – whether *x* realizes it or not¹⁴ – *x* would love what would in fact harm *x* and make *x* unhappy.¹⁵

If no one could love what will in fact make them unhappy, we would then have the result we want for the Menexenus discussion – that people will not love those who hate them and will harm them, and that the object loved can only be what benefits. Now, as Chapter 10, §4 has shown (cf. also §2), we have just these results for desire – at any rate, according to

¹² See *Republic* IV, 412D4–7: ‘It is *this* that a person will love most of all – when he holds the same things to be beneficial to *it* as to himself, and when he thinks that if *it* does well (*ekeinou . . . eu prattontos*), he himself will do well, and if not, the opposite.’ We have taken these lines as our epigraph for the volume.

¹³ This claim is of course the converse of the claim already employed above, in Socrates’ argument against Lysis, that

LOVE, if *x* loves *y*, then *x* desires that *y* be benefited, and so be happy.

¹⁴ See further Chapter 10 above, and esp. §2 (‘the principle of real reference’).

¹⁵ See Chapter 3, §(c) above.

the Socratic psychology of action labelled as ‘Socratic intellectualism’. No one can desire what will harm them. We desire – from the inside – only the real good. This rules out our desiring the apparent good (what we in ignorance *take* to be the real good), and with it Case I above. What is more, since what we desire we must also *see as* the good, Case II is also ruled out – there is no such things as desiring something brutally, without seeing it as in some way good. (More on this alleged ‘brute’ love below.)

So if the result we have for desire also applies to love, we have explained why it is the case that if *y* hates *x* and will harm *x*, *x* cannot love *y*; and this accounts for the more difficult of our two assumptions, (A1). As for the assumption (A2), that our account of the *object loved* must admit of a general characterization, it is certainly familiar enough as an assumption one tends to attribute to Socrates. But it may also be said that the idea that all love is for the *beneficial* is a centrepiece of Socratic intellectualism. In that case, of course, the present argument could not be a basis for arguing for Socratic intellectualism, since it rather presupposes such a position. But it does suggest that there is a coherent view here that Socrates has in mind.

Does our account rely too much on material from elsewhere? We think not. Certainly we see no intrinsic flaw in arguments which introduce considerations that are not fully spelled out until later in the same dialogue, especially if that will happen in the very next stretch of argument. But how are the considerations we have used introduced in the present argument? By way of the thesis that

E/F. it is paradoxical that people should be friends to enemies or enemies to friends.

This is paradoxical, we suggest, because one’s enemies hate one, and will attempt to harm one (something we get from the discussion of the poets and cosmologists immediately following), and it is paradoxical to love what will in fact harm one. Why? If we have already drawn on the discussion of the poets and cosmologists, may we not draw on it for the closely related point that all love must be for what benefits, so that none can be for what harms? But that gives us our result. Applying the doctrine that no one wants to be harmed (in the Socratic understanding of desire as always for the real good),¹⁶ what we have is that people cannot be properly said to love what will harm them. At best there will be some analogue of ‘doing what seems best’ – a ‘false love’ of the being that hates one. The idea of such ‘false love’ will be this: that when *x* thinks *x* loves a *y* that will harm

¹⁶ See e.g. *Apology* 25C–26A. Obviously ‘harmed’ here stands for ‘harmed all things considered’.

x (whether *x* knows this or not) there is something else *z* which is what *x* loves and to which *x* falsely believes *y* is a means.¹⁷

At any rate, that is how we propose to explain the extraordinary argument that *x* can't love *y* if *y* hates *x* and will attempt to harm *x*, on the grounds that one cannot be a friend to an enemy. We will be happy to entertain alternative hypotheses explanatory of this extraordinary argument – which is *all* we get from this passage looked at just by itself. We just have not been able to think of any reasonable alternatives to the hypothesis we have proposed.

This said, the objection will remain that while we may now be in possession of a Socratic rationale for saying that one cannot be friends to enemies, the resulting claim that one cannot love people one knows will harm one still seems flagrantly at variance with the facts (or as people like to say, 'the observed facts') in yet another – irrational – way. For it will seem to many to be a straightforward matter of observation that what people *believe* about being harmed or benefited has nothing to do with whether they have these feelings of love or hate towards those who hate them. Some people *just love* others, the objection runs, regardless of what they believe about any harm or benefit they will receive from that person – as some people *just hate* others. Is not this love what mothers feel for their children? 'Don't you understand? Love is this *feeling*. At least very often it has *nothing to do with* what one believes.' That is, the proposed Socratic rationale is worthless because falsified just by ordinary observation.¹⁸

But it is not just ordinary observation that is being applied here. There is a theory about love, feelings and beliefs presupposed by the objection. We might call the theory presupposed by the objection *the theory of brute love and brute hatred*. The theory is precisely analogous to the theory of brute irrational desires in the parts-of-the-soul doctrine of *Republic* IV, which we discussed in passing in Chapter 10 above (§4). We shall not attempt here to demonstrate the non-existence of any such brute love or brute hatred.¹⁹ All we want to do here is to argue that we can understand Socrates' *thinking*

¹⁷ This deals with the cases we found awkward in Chapter 3 above – where *x* loves *y* but either (a) *x* does not realize that *y* will harm *x*, or (b) *x* does realize that *y* will harm *x*, but thinks nevertheless that he or she loves *y*. (As those who care for the unfortunate with this 'false love' will say: 'That's not love: that's just craziness!') See also below (text to n. 52).

¹⁸ The objection here is not fundamentally different from that involved in 'Case n' above. But it puts the objection more strongly by invoking a notion not so far invoked there – the Platonic notion of brute irrational desires. On the idea of 'observed facts', see also Penner 1990: 48, with n. 13. Cf. also Chapter 10 above, n. 48 on the mother 'instinctively' rushing to the aid of her child.

¹⁹ But again, see Chapter 10 above, n. 48, where we argued against there being any such thing as brute love (a mother's loving undertaking of extreme risk in order to save her child is not, we suggested, purely instinctual).

he has adequately dealt with the impossibility of being friends to enemies if we attribute to him the sorts of assumptions we have just formulated concerning the role played in love and hatred by beliefs about what will benefit and what will harm. This theory is not refuted by observable facts, even though it is confronted by, and *must meet*, the difficulties raised by an alternative theory we are calling the theory of brute love and brute hatred.

It may be useful at this point – just to make clear how differently Socrates thinks about the place of beliefs in states such as love and hatred, and how plainly he is committed to denying the existence of such ‘brute’ love and hatred – to look briefly at the following ‘intellectualist’ account of what it is to hate someone, derived from *Euthyphro* 6B–C, 7B–8E:

s1–1. what it is for there to be wars and enmities (*echthrai*) amongst the gods is for the gods to differ – not about which number is greater, which things are larger or smaller, lighter or heavier and so forth (all of which differences can be removed fairly easily by means of measurement), but, rather, to differ – concerning just and unjust, beautiful and ugly, good and bad, including differing about whether it is just or pious to take action against one’s father when he has acted unjustly.

We see here that to be an enemy (*echthros*) to, or²⁰ hate *x* is to hold different beliefs concerned with good and bad, beautiful and ugly, just and unjust, from those which *x* holds. Lying behind our love of *y* or our hatred of *y* is always a belief relating to benefit or harm. It is on such intellectualist assumptions – if they can be made out – that we get to block the argument from brute love or brute hatred. Such intellectualist assumptions also underlie the notion of desire in our account of hating and loving in terms of desiring harm and benefit for the hated and loved respectively. For here,

s1–2. to desire to harm *y* is to think it good that *y* be harmed,
and

s1–3. to desire to benefit *y* is to think it good that *y* be benefited.

It is in any case easy to see, given our sketch of Socratic intellectualism above, that without beliefs no actions can be generated.²¹

The upshot of the argument with Menexenus, then, as we see it, is this, on our account. The case where *x* supposes that *x* loves *y* but *y* hates *x*

²⁰ The Menexenus discussion in the *Lysis* assumes that hating (*misein*) has as much to do with enmity as loving (*philein*) has to do with ‘friendship’ (*philia*): 213A5–C4.

²¹ By the account in Chapter 10, §4, every particular voluntary action flows from the desire to do just that particular action, which particular action must, on that same account, be believed by the agent to be the particular action which constitutes the best means currently available to the agent’s own maximum good starting from where he or she is now.

and could indeed harm x , shows, on the assumptions about desire Socrates works with, that we have not got a universal and adequate account of ‘ x loves y ’ – unless (213C7–8) there is some alternative besides x , y and both, to be what is universally loved in ‘ x loves y ’. Our account of why none of the answers x , y or *both* will do is that no one desires to be harmed, a claim which irresistibly suggests that what everyone desires is to be benefited.²² In short, what everyone desires is – the good. And it is precisely this alternative – besides the apparently exhaustive alternatives x , y or both – which is fixed on in the dialectical discussion of the poets and cosmologists in the argument that follows (213E–216C). As we put it above, the claim that emerges from this dialectical discussion is that

LOVE/G. the good is the only thing loved; and it is loved because of the benefit it brings – at any rate, to those who are not self-sufficient (and hence are in need of further benefit).

Before we leave the Menexenus discussion, and by way of introduction to the passage on the poets and cosmologists, we should pause over the almost involuntary outburst from Lysis (213D2–5) when Socrates suggests, at the end of the discussion (213D1–2, 213E1–214A2), that he and Menexenus may have taken a wrong turning – which, we take it, is a matter of their having left out a possible candidate for what it is that is *philon* or friend whenever x loves y . The outburst occurs *as if*

Kn6. Lysis sees that some option has not been explored that should have been explored – one that probably has something to do with knowledge, though evidently he doesn’t see exactly what that is.

That Socrates takes Lysis to be seeing that what has been omitted must have something to do with knowledge is strongly suggested by his remark at D7 that he was pleased with the *love of wisdom (philosophia)* that Lysis’ outburst betokened (and it is in any case, as we saw in Chapter 3, §(b) above, the natural conclusion for Lysis to draw from his own initial conversation with Socrates).²³ But that of course is not to say that Lysis sees that the immediate advance to be made in the argument is to be made via the singling out of the good as the universal object of love. This is so even though what the good is *might turn out to be* wisdom or knowledge. Lysis will later show up again, unlike Menexenus, as having *some* – perhaps minimal – grasp on what knowledge has to do with all of Socrates’ puzzling questions.

²² We note here, in anticipation of something to be said later, that it will not be enough, in order to establish that x loves y , that x sees y ’s happiness as bound up with x ’s. See below, n. 63.

²³ Evidently we take the remark about *philosophia* to have double import: (a) Lysis responds in this way because, like a true philosopher, he follows the argument with great intensity; and (b) he sees that wisdom probably has some relevance to the option the argument will now lead us to explore.

3 THE POETS AND THE COSMOLOGISTS (213E–216B)

The views considered in this section on the poets and cosmologists are two: the view of some poets and cosmologists that like loves like; then the view of others that opposite loves opposite. In keeping with what will be required for the great central argument that is yet to come (216C–221D), and also with the requirements of the preceding ‘Menexenus discussion’ (that is, if we are to understand what is supposed to be paradoxical about being friends to enemies or enemies to friends), Socrates needs to establish in this section of argument that only the good is loved – and at that only by those who are not self-sufficient. For those purposes, it suits him perfectly to consider as candidates for ‘likes’ and ‘opposites’, in this discussion of the views of the poets and cosmologists, solely *the good* and *the bad*.

Exactly *how* he establishes this claim of his about the object of love (and how apparent gaps in his argument may be filled), we have discussed in sufficient detail in Chapter 4 above, and we need not repeat the discussion here. Of course, the view that the good is the only universal object of love contains the seeds of destruction both for the view that like loves like and for the view that opposite loves opposite. For, first, the good, being self-sufficient, love nothing.²⁴ (This gets rid of ‘like loves like’ if the likes in question are taken to be the good.) The bad (as Socrates construes them

²⁴ We notice here once again the breathtaking assumption – to which both Socrates and Diotima in the *Symposium* (200A–201C, 201E–202E, 204A–205A) also unhesitatingly commit themselves (cf. also *Euthyphro* 13B7–D2, 14E10–11, 15B2) – that the (perfectly) good are self-sufficient. We devoted a great deal of space in Chapter 4 to explaining, and justifying, this assumption of Socrates’; here we shall add only a little to that earlier discussion. First, a small observation: it is just this conception of the good that is needed if we are to get the conception of the bad that will be employed in 216C–221D (and will be introduced in 217B–218B): what makes people (perfectly) bad, Socrates argues there, is a presence of bad of such a kind as to ensure that they no longer even desire any benefit or escape from harm. Secondly, and more importantly, we need to address a startling disconnection – one that we have already alluded to in Part I above (Chapter 3, n. 25; Chapter 4, n. 58) – between the modern use of ‘good of its kind’, as in ‘good person’, and a usage that would require that a fully good person be self-sufficient. Can anything be said here to alleviate the puzzlement that the modern reader is likely to feel at that usage? We think something can be said. But it will play havoc with modern treatments of the good. Our suggestion here is tentative.

Let us look again at the functional theory of the good. This functional theory of good is often taken to be equivalent, at least for function words, to doctrines of things being good by being good of their kind.²⁵ To adapt the modern theory of something being good of its kind to the functional theory is to get that something will be good of its kind if it fulfils the function of things of that kind. (There is an obvious parallel here with Ziff’s theory of ‘good of its kind’ as ‘answering to some interests [corresponding to that kind]’. To adapt Ziff’s theory to the functional theory is to get that a thing answers to some interests [corresponding to that kind] if it fulfils the function of things of the kind in question.) So there is a considerable convergence between these modern theories and the functional theory. But there is also a point at which it is possible Socrates and Plato differ strikingly from moderns – a point, that is, where perhaps moderns have overlooked something. It’s this: that in the idea of a function of, say, a knife, are actually contained two goods. The function of a doctor

here – they turn out to be the thoroughly bad: the opposite of the self-sufficiently good) even hate *themselves*,²⁵ so they do not love the good and do not love the bad. (This gets rid of ‘like loves like’ if the likes in question are taken to be the bad.) So we have the good as object of love, but nothing – that is, in the present context, neither the good nor the bad – that can love it, if we follow the theory that like loves like. And the view that opposite loves opposite is similarly ruled out by the fact that the only possible object of love is the good, and the bad does/do not love the good.

4 THE GREAT CENTRAL PASSAGE OF THE *LYSIS* (216C–221D)

Once it is established that in ‘*x* loves *y*’, the only attribute universally applicable to all instances of *y* is the *good*, we are finally set up for Socrates to introduce his claim that the only attribute universally applicable to all instances of *x* is the *neither good nor bad*. (The same pair of attributes, with the *neither good nor bad* loving the *good*, are also central to the account of *erōs* in the *Symposium*: see especially *Symposium* 201D–205A.) Socrates’ proposal that this suggestion is a kind of ‘prophecy’ (216D3, 5) we took – in

is to heal knowingly, so a good doctor is a person who heals knowingly. This being good – a kind of being good at – is the first good, corresponding to being good of its kind. (Similarly for good knives. If someone says that it is not the knife but the person who uses it, if competent, which is what is good at cutting, the essential point remains: goodness of its kind is to be read, in one way or other, in terms of being good at – fulfilling the function.) But there is a second good involved here, that is entirely overlooked in the idea of fulfilling a function (good doctor, good archer, good knife and even good thief). This is the good achieved by the function or by fulfilling the function. In a context where we call a doctor, an archer, a knife or a thief good of their kind, we are surely also standardly suggesting that health, the target being hit, cleanly cutting or stealing are, in that context, goods. To imagine someone being a good thief, for example, is to imagine some good being achieved by stealing. (So too with Ziff’s ‘answering to some interests’. It is what is, in one way or other, good at something that answers to those interests. But it is surely also being taken, in the relevant contexts, that the interests too are goods in those contexts.) When one thinks about functional goodness, it must surely strike one that the first good (the functional equivalent of being good of its kind) is dependent on the second good; and that the second good is not obviously a matter of being good of its kind. Take those occasions where healing, the target being hit, cutting cleanly and stealing are good. (They are obviously not good on all occasions.) Why are they good on those occasions? Not, we think, because they are, in turn, good of their kind. Why, then? The first protreptic of the *Euthydemus* suggests an answer here, as does Kant’s theory of the hypothetical imperative (along with the theory of counsels of prudence), at least when one asks how at any rate certain parts of Kantian doctrine bear on Socratic–Platonic–Aristotelian thought: that they are good if they lead to the happiness of the agent in question – i.e., the agent in relation to which we are assessing [objective] good (in Ziff’s terms, the agent in connection with which we are assessing interests in the context). It is as if being good of its kind (good at healing, cutting, stealing) is a hypothetical good, while the only things that are categorically good are those things the function aims at achieving on those occasions where those things in fact lead to the happiness of the agents in question. (Here we take it that happiness is the objective good for humans, and where one speaks of the objective good for animals or other beings, that will be an objective good analogous to happiness.)

²⁵ Cf. *Republic* I, 351C7ff., esp. 351E7–352A8.

Chapter 5 above – to be an admission that it is his own thesis, one of such a sort that there was going to be no easy way for him to elicit it from his interlocutors.²⁶

With this as starting-point, Socrates now embarks upon the long dialectical argument at 216C–221D which we (Penner and Rowe) believe constitutes the central section of the *Lysis*, and which culminates in the following intensely puzzling conclusion: that

- LI. What it is for *x* to love *y* = for the neither good nor bad to love (a) a certain unique and ultimate good, the ‘first friend’ (219B–220B), not because of the bad (220B–221C), but simply (b) because of desire (221D), where (c) what one loves one desires (221B7–8). In addition, (d) none of the other things we say we love (even if for the sake of something else) is a true or real friend (220A7–B5), so that (presumably) nothing else is ever truly or really loved.

There is much in this curious, and complex, claim that no reader is likely even to begin to understand when he or she first comes upon it. If we are to get anywhere with understanding it, we need to be able to say

(A) what the ‘first friend’ is;

we need to ask

(B) why Socrates says that the cause of this love of the first friend is not the bad, but simply desire;

we need to say

(C) what sort of desire this is that allows one to say that what one loves one desires;

and we need to explain the highly paradoxical claim

(D) that we don’t love anything *but* the ‘first friend’.

(After all, if we are trying to say what *Lysis*’ friendship for Menexenus is, it will not be much of an account if Menexenus turns out not to be a friend *at all*.)²⁷ We take up tasks (A)–(D) in succession in §§5–7 below – though the full identification of the ‘first friend’ with knowledge will not be completed till §10.

When we have reached *that* point, this second trip of ours through the *Lysis* will be virtually over, barring some unfinished business. For with the exception of the discussion of what is *oikeion*, what ‘belongs’, in 221E ff., and, with it, the final impasse that Socrates and the two boys will appear to have got into in 222B–E, the journey is to all intents and purposes completed by the puzzling larger conclusion (LI) just laid out. We say

²⁶ Nor do interlocutors play much of a part in the introduction of the neither good nor bad in the *Symposium* (the main source is mythological talk about *erōs* as a *daimōn*).

²⁷ Vlastos and others have been right to insist on this point.

'will appear to have got into': in 222B–E, as we have argued in Chapter 7, it is actually Lysis and Menexenus who are in difficulties, because – in a way reminiscent of the endings of a number of other dialogues²⁸ – they turn away from (L1), in a move that lands them in a place where they had admitted earlier they cannot allow themselves to be. The effect is to leave (L1) quite untouched. (We distinguish here between (L1), as the fundamental conclusion of 216C–221D, on the one hand, and, on the other, the claim at 222A6–7 about the necessity of the genuine lover's being loved by the darling. The latter we take to be the conclusion of the larger argument of the dialogue, i.e. as comprehending all three of its subject-matters: not just our desire for good, but also 'romantic love', i.e. *erōs*, and 'friendship', i.e. *philia* between friends, parents and children, and so on. This second conclusion we claim already to have dealt with adequately in Part I; though as a matter of fact it is, in effect, no more than a particular application of (L1).)

5 TASK (A): A PRELIMINARY IDENTIFICATION OF THE 'FIRST FRIEND' AS – WHATEVER ELSE IT MAY BE – THE ULTIMATE TERM OF A CERTAIN MEANS-END HIERARCHY

To get clearer on just what the puzzling conclusion of this central argument – 216C–221D – is supposed to say, we shall need to retrace our steps through the argument that gets us there. Consider the dialectical development of this conclusion within the passage, according to which, in '*x* loves *y*', the *x* is always something neither good nor bad, while the *y* is always a certain unique and ultimate good called the 'first friend'. The successive dialectical steps, each rejected in favour of the step that follows it, are these:

- s1. The neither good nor bad becomes friend of the good (= the beautiful) (216CI–D5).

Example: the sick man loves the doctor.

- s2. The neither good nor bad is friend of the good because of the presence of bad. More exactly, the neither good nor bad is friend of the good because of *one species* of presence of the bad – in which the bad that is present has not yet removed the desire for good from the neither good nor bad. A removal of the desire for good would turn the *neither good nor bad* into the *bad* (217B4–C2, 218B8–C2).

Examples: the sick man loves the doctor because of his sickness, provided that he still desires to get well, and the person who is ignorant loves wisdom or knowledge: ignorant, that is, in one way but not in another – not so

²⁸ We would list *Charmides*, *Euthyphro*, *Ion*, *Lesser Hippias* and *Laches* as examples.

ignorant as to be totally ignorant of his or her own ignorance (217EI–218B5, esp. 217E5–6, 217E8–218A2, 218A4–6, A7–B1, B3–5).²⁹

[Comment. We pause here briefly, to notice that the main part of (s2), i.e. ‘the neither good nor bad is friend of the good because of the presence of bad’, using the only example (the sick man) in this dialectic that appears outside (s2), is complete at 217C2, and that the same formulation, with only a slight change of word-order, is simply repeated at 218CI–2 – after an entire Stephanus page of material. That page one might have thought unnecessary. It is true that it gives us a picturesque account of two kinds of presence of white in an actor’s hair; it also gives us the example of knowledge as something that makes a person *good*, (total) ignorance as making him *bad*, and ignorance at least somewhat aware of itself as making people *neither good nor bad*. But why exactly did Plato add this part? Why did he feel the need to add this material? It is our view that a proper answer to this question throws further light on the selection of knowledge as the ‘first friend’, as it does on the question of the desires of such thoroughly corrupt people as there may be. But back to the dialectic.]

s3. The neither good nor bad, because of the bad and inimical, is a friend of the good *for the sake of a good that is a further friend* (219AI–B2).

Example: The sick man, because of his sickness, loves the doctor for the sake of the health he (the sick man) also loves.

s4. The neither good nor bad is a friend of the good because of the bad and inimical, for the sake of a good that is a further friend (e.g. for the sake of health) which may itself be a friend for the sake of a further friend . . . and so on till we come to a ‘first friend’ which is the good and a friend; and the process stops here, so as not to become an infinite regress, the first friend *not* being a friend for the sake of a further friend (219CI–D2, D4–5, 220B4–7).

Example: the sick man loves the doctor for the sake of a health which he also loves for the sake of some further thing he loves, . . . and so on, till we come to some good that is an ultimate object for the sake of which he desires all other things. *Analogy* (219D5–220A6): the Great King makes much of this goblet because he makes much of the wine it contains that is an antidote to his son’s sickness – the son being that of which he makes everything.

s5. The neither good nor bad is a friend of the ‘first friend’ (that for the sake of which anything we *say* is loved is *said* to be loved – and which is the only thing that is a real or true friend: 219D2–4, 219E7–220B3), not for the sake of a further friend, but because of the bad and inimical.
[Implicit in (s4)]

²⁹ Cf. also *Symposium* 203E–204A.

and finally the conclusion (s6) formulated in more detail above as (L1):

- s6. The neither good nor bad is friend to (desires, is in love with) the good not because of the bad but because of desire (221D2–6).

What this dialectical sequence tells us is, at the very least, that

- L2. the 'first friend' comes to be identifiable when we realize that the things we say we love are said to be loved by us in a certain hierarchical fashion: we are said to love y_1 as a means to (or for the sake of) y_2 , which we are also said to love; and we are said to love y_2 as a means to (or for the sake of) y_3 , which we are also said to love, and so on till we come to a y_n which is the 'first friend', which we truly and really love.

But before we go any further here, we need to concede that talk of love here – even in the phrase 'said to love' – seems odd. In fact, if we look at the one example which Socrates uses to illustrate each of the successive dialectical claims (s1)–(s4) – the sick man loving the doctor or health – we see (as we have noted more than once before) that what is described in terms of love here is something philosophers of the twentieth and twenty-first century would feel more comfortable describing in terms of desire. The sick man loves the doctor (or the medical art: 216E7–217A2 with 217A4–6; see also Chapter 5, n. 49)?! The sick man loves the doctor because of a certain sort of presence of sickness in him (217A7–B7, E6–9)?! The sick man loves the doctor because of the sickness that he has and for the sake of something else he loves, namely health (218D6–219B4)?! And the sick man loves the doctor because of sickness for the sake of health that he also loves, and loves for the sake of something further which he also loves . . . and so on indefinitely or until we come to a stop with the 'first friend' (219B5–D2)?!

No, it seems apparent that 'desire' would have been, for most twentieth and twenty-first century philosophers, a rather more appropriate word than 'love' or 'friendship to' in these illustrations of the theses (s1)–(s4).³⁰ The sick man desires health and so desires [that he get to consult with] the doctor. We suggest, therefore, that – in parallel with (L2), which gives us the 'first friend' at the top of a hierarchy of things we say we love for the sake of yet further things we are said to love – we might also say that

- L3. the 'first friend' appears at the top of a hierarchy of things we desire (or say we desire) for the sake of further things we also desire (or say we desire). The 'first friend' is the ultimate end in which terminates the hierarchy of things we desire (or say we desire) as means to further things we desire (or say we desire) as means to . . . and so forth.

If this is correct, then the claim that, according to Socrates, the 'first friend' is the only thing we ever love is tantamount to the claim that

³⁰ But contrast desire and love in the *Phaedrus* (where we already have irrational desires that move to action: see the Epilogue), and in Augustine.

- L4. Socrates construes all love and all desire as we normally think of it (loving various things and people, desiring to do various actions, and desiring various states such as health) as involving a means–end or teleological ('for the sake of') hierarchy, culminating in a single ultimate end, which end (the good, the beautiful, the 'first friend') is then asserted by Socrates to be the sole thing loved or desired.

While not solving any *other* problems about the 'first friend' – such as why on earth we cannot be said to love things we (apparently) love as means to the 'first friend', and whether the 'first friend' is happiness, or wisdom, or the Form of the Good (to name only three candidates) – this at least identifies the 'first friend' more narrowly than did the claim in (L1) that what it is for x to love y = for the neither good nor bad to love a certain unique and ultimate good, the 'first friend'. What we have now added is that

FFT. the 'first friend' is the ultimate term in a means–end or teleological hierarchy.

With this partial identification of the 'first friend' in hand, we may also note that – in absolutely parallel fashion – we find that in the *Gorgias*

- G. Socrates construes all wanting as we normally think of it (wanting to do various actions and wanting various states such as health) as involving a means–end or teleological hierarchy, culminating in a single ultimate end, which end he then appears to say is the only thing actually wanted.³¹

This completes the promised preliminary identification of the 'first friend' – the first of the tasks we set before ourselves at the end of §4 above. The 'first friend' is the ultimate term of a means–end or teleological hierarchy. We have yet, of course, to say whether the 'first friend' is, say, happiness, or wisdom, or the Form of the Good, or something else altogether, as we have yet to say why nothing else is really or truly loved or wanted.

6 THE NEXT TWO TASKS: (B) WHY DOES SOCRATES SAY THAT THE CAUSE OF THE NEITHER GOOD NOR BAD'S LOVING THE 'FIRST FRIEND' IS NOT THE BAD, BUT DESIRE? AND (C) WHAT SORT OF DESIRE IS IT THAT ALLOWS HIM TO SAY THAT WHAT ONE LOVES ONE DESIRES?

The close parallel between love or friendship in the *Lysis* and wanting in the *Gorgias* – see §5 above – suggests we may also now be in a position to carry

³¹ See Chapter 10, §4 above. (The *Gorgias* gives three examples of things good in themselves. But two of them are surely there to reflect Polus' view rather than Socrates'. Cf. text to n. 44 below.)

out tasks (B) and (C). Now we are quite happy to affirm that what is crucial to its being desire that is the cause of the neither good nor bad loving the ‘first friend’ is merely that the cause is *not the bad*. (Love is not merely the seeking of remedy for the bad.) We are happy to affirm that love is the seeking of (the desire for) something positive – and is not simply intent upon the removal of the bad. (Good is not the absence of bad. Rather bad is the absence of good.)³² Viewed in this way, the substitution of ‘because of desire’ for ‘because of the bad’ is simply articulating the thought that love is desire *for a positive good*. This said, however, we also think it important to say more about how desire is involved here, and about just what sort of desire is in question. It is our view that

- L5. the desire because of which the neither good nor bad loves the good (the ‘first friend’) itself has the hierarchical structure described in (L4) and (G) above.³³

Our confidence in this claim flows in part, as we have noticed before, from the overpowering impression the *Lysis* gives us that

- L6. *philia* (love, including parental love, friendship), *erōs* (passionate love, being in love, sexual passion) and *epithumia* (desire) are used almost, if not quite, interchangeably in the *Lysis*.³⁴

Since *philia* is plainly hierarchical in the way described, (L6) will irresistibly suggest – such is the force of this impression of interchangeability – that *epithumia*, desire, too is to be construed hierarchically within the *Lysis* (as it is in the *Gorgias*).³⁵ But if so, then the teleological-hierarchical desire for the good (and indeed for the ‘first friend’) occurs twice in Socrates’ account of

³² This much we said in Part I (see Chapter 5, §D).

³³ Part I, Chapter 5 made this point too, only in more general terms; here we mean to be more precise, and especially to ground our reading more precisely.

³⁴ See Chapter 5, esp. text to n. 30, and nn. 16, 44. Four pieces of evidence for treating desire as ‘virtually interchangeable’ with the hierarchical notion of *philia*: (1) 217c1, where Socrates says, in the same breath, that the neither good nor bad both *desires* (*epithumoi*) and is *friend* of the good; (2) 221b7, where he says that what *desires* (*epithumia*) and is *in love with* (*erōnta*) something must also be *friend to* (or *love*: *philein*) it; (3) 221d6–e5, where he says that a thing *desires* and is *friend* of what it lacks; and that *erōs*, *philia* and *epithumia* are all of the *oikeion*; (4) 221e7–222a3, where he says that if one *desires* or is *in love with* something *y*, one wouldn’t ever *desire* or be *in love with* or *love* (*ephilei*) *y* unless *y* in some way belongs to one.

³⁵ As to what it is for *philia*, *erōs* and *epithumia* to be ‘near-interchangeable’, and indeed as to what additional structure it is reasonable to attribute to *philia* and *erōs* over and above desire for good, our proposal will be that love (‘friendship’), and being in love, are to be taken as forms of desire for the ultimate good (the ‘first friend’), though with extra, differentiating, elements in the case of love (‘friendship’) and in the case of being in love (on which more below, in §6). That is, we propose the following speculation – that

sg. *epithumia* is the genus, while *philia*, *erōs* and other more specific desires are the species.

This proposal must remain speculative to a considerable degree, since Plato nowhere in the *Lysis* explicitly addresses the question of what exactly the relation between the three things is. (We note in passing that in the *Symposium* there is a generic *erōs* which covers all *epithumia*, of which what we

philia in (L1) – both in the shape of the *love* of the neither good nor bad for the ‘first friend’, and as that *because of which* the neither good nor bad loves the ‘first friend’. We may think of the second occurrence as bringing out the point that the teleological-hierarchical desire is a desire for a *positive* good.

A possible objection to our interpretation of ‘because of desire’ needs to be disposed of. The objection flows from Socrates’ suggestion, in 220E6–221B6, that hunger and thirst may be good, bad or neither good nor bad. Hunger and thirst, one might suppose, will be paradigms of the sorts of desires, *epithumiai*, that Plato treats in Book iv of the *Republic* as what we have called ‘brute’ desires for drink, food, sex and so forth, because they bring about voluntary actions completely independently of the agent’s beliefs about the good (i.e., about what is best overall). If – the objector will ask – hunger and thirst at this point in the *Lysis* can be good, bad or neither, why are they not *good-independent* desires? And does this not cause serious difficulties for our claim that the desire because of which the neither good nor bad loves the ‘first friend’ is uniformly a teleological (good-dependent), hierarchical desire?

We are quite unmoved by the objection. Socrates also says of actions, at *Gorgias* 467C5–468C8, that they are in themselves neither good nor bad, sometimes partaking in good, sometimes partaking in bad, sometimes partaking in what is neither good nor bad; yet it is in this very same passage of the *Gorgias* that he is setting up the claim that all voluntary actions are generated via a means–end or teleological hierarchy.³⁶ Thus, that hunger and thirst in the *Lysis* can be good, bad or neither does not constitute a good reason for finding in them the good-independent desires of *Republic* iv.³⁷ (If good-independent desires *were* to be found in the *Lysis*, we would add, they would make a complete mess of Socrates’ analysis, which pretends to be a single, comprehensive and exhaustive account of all desire, all *philia*. And he shows no signs whatever, here in 220–1, of having found desires that fail to fit the pattern he has so laboriously worked out for desire in general.)

ordinarily think of as *erōs* is a species. That, allowing for the difference in context between the two dialogues, we take as generally supporting our speculation (SG.).)

³⁶ We need to notice the double use of ‘neither good nor bad’ in the *Gorgias* passage. According to one use, all actions are neither good nor bad (that is, as it will be put later, they are in themselves neither good nor bad). According to the other use, some actions are good (at least, they partake in good), some are bad (at least, they partake in bad) and others are neither good nor bad (by partaking neither in good nor bad). It will be one additional task of the next section (§7) to explain this double use.

³⁷ For the idea of how, on Platonic and Aristotelian principles – contrary to anything Socrates would have granted – such irrational appetites capable of bringing about actions of the sort Aristotle would call ‘voluntary’ could so function, see Chapter 10, n. 2 and (Chapter 10) §4 above.

To sum up on our tasks (b) and (c): we propose that when Socrates says that the neither good nor bad loves the good (the ‘first friend’), not because of the bad but because of desire, what he is saying is not just that

L7A. love is a positive love of the good (beyond any provision of remedies for the bad),

but also that

L7B. love is a form of desire for the good of the hierarchical means–end or teleological sort.

This completes our account of why Socrates says that the cause of the neither good nor bad loving the first friend is not the bad, but *desire*.

7 TASK (D): THE PROBLEM THAT SOCRATES NOW SEEMS TO BE SAYING THAT WE DO NOT LOVE OUR CHILDREN, OUR DOGS, WINE OR OUR FRIENDS: IS HE REALLY SAYING THAT?³⁸

While the preceding section has in the main carried out task (c) – saying what sort of desire we should suppose love is – some sort of teleological, and indeed *hierarchical* teleological desire – we may gain further light on the sort of desire love is by carrying out task (d): the task of explaining how it can be (as it appears to be, from our account of Socrates’ position so far) that we don’t love anything *but* the ‘first friend’. How on earth can it make any sense to claim that we don’t love people who are our friends, children, dogs, wine, quails, wisdom and the like? We propose to deal with this apparent problem for our reading by looking to the parallel treatment of wanting in the classic argument at *Gorgias* 466A–468E;³⁹ and we shall offer the hypothesis that no more in the *Lysis* than in the *Gorgias* does Socrates block us from saying that we love friends, children, or dogs – provided that we are prepared to say such things in a sufficiently circumspect way.

The argument in *Gorgias* 466A–468E maintains that tyrants and orators have no power (cannot do anything they want, but only do what seems best to them), in the absence of knowledge – which they profess not to

³⁸ Were it the style of this book to have long titles for sections, the full title for the present section would have been: ‘The problem that we no longer (it seems, according to Socrates’ account) love our children, our dogs, wine or our friends; and the parallel between the treatment of the “first friend” in the *Lysis* and the intellectualist treatment of desire for the good at *Gorgias* 466A–468E. How this latter treatment shows that there is, after all, a way in which we *do*, in certain circumstances, want to do some particular actions: so that there may also be a way in which we may [be correctly said to] love things other than the “first friend” provided that they are *in fact* a means to the first friend. How we may also get from the account so far an explanation of how it is that most philosophers differ from Socrates in thinking that we may love yet other things that are *not* in fact such means, provided only that they are *believed to be* a means to the “first friend”.’

³⁹ The following treatment of this *Gorgias* passage will be in essence a summary of Penner 1991.

need in order to have power. There are basically two arguments here. The first, at 466A4–467A10, shows that, relative to the premiss that

1. power is good for its possessor
— which it is all too easy for Polus to accept since he is precisely urging the merits of gaining this power —
2. orators and tyrants lacking knowledge will inevitably make mistakes and so get what is bad for themselves.

So, on the assumption (1) that power is good for its possessor,

3. orators and tyrants have no power.

But this argument will scarcely carry conviction with someone who lacks Polus' zealous devotion to orators and tyrants. Why on earth would anyone suppose that power is in general good for its possessor? Surely it is sometimes good for its possessor, sometimes bad?⁴⁰

Plato accordingly sets about offering a second argument that orators and tyrants have no power, this time using heavily a distinction already introduced — to Polus' evident annoyance — in the first argument, without its being necessary in the slightest to that argument. This is the distinction between (i) *doing what you want* and (ii) *doing what your please*, or *what you see fit (dokei)* or *what seems best (dokei beltiston)*,⁴¹ a distinction which comes out incidentally in the first argument in the idea that to do what you please while in ignorance is to get a bad thing. If doing what you want is to be contrasted with doing what you please, the point must then be that doing what you want is something that always does get you a good thing (or the best thing). But in that case to want the good is to want the *real* good, not just the apparent good — which is only sometimes also the real good. The distinction in question may seem to represent at best an arbitrary bit of linguistic legislation on Socrates' part: the usual response from interpreters

⁴⁰ For those who do not accept that power is good for its possessor it may seem that this argument is irrelevant, because based upon a premiss foolishly accepted by Polus. Such interpreters are on the same footing as those who find the argument against Lysis in *Lysis* 207–10 irrelevant as soon as one has pointed out the childish conception of happiness it contains. But as we have argued, both in Chapter 2 and in the first section of the present chapter, that argument in the *Lysis* still works even after the false premiss has been removed; and the situation is identical in the *Gorgias*. (If power is to get what you want, and what you want is what leads to your good, then power always *will* get you the good, and if it doesn't, it isn't power. Of course this account of wanting is, by modern lights, tendentious. But we think that moderns are wrong on this point.)

⁴¹ Does this distinction surface also in the *Lysis* — in that initial conversation between Socrates and Lysis? (See 210A9–B7 'with respect to the things about which we become good thinkers, everyone will hand them over to us, whether Greeks or non-Greeks, men or women, and we shall do in these cases whatever we *wish* . . . ; with respect to the things about which we do not acquire intelligence, on the other hand, [no one] will hand it over to us to do in relation to them what *appears to us* to be the thing to do . . .') We do not suppose so. What is said in this passage will be as readily accepted by Lysis (who thinks that what you want is the same thing as what you *think* you want).

is to postulate a special sense of ‘want’ – what one ‘really wants’, or even what one ‘would have wanted if one had acted with full knowledge’ – and treat that as opposed to ordinary wanting.⁴² But we reject the view that Plato was so careless here as to have intended one thing and said another.

Let us look more carefully at what he says. In fact, he offers an *argument* for the distinction. Once that argument is carefully studied, it will be seen that the postulation of special senses simply misconstrues what Socrates is saying.⁴³ As he makes *us* wait for this argument, he also makes Polus wait, rubbing Polus’ nose in the idea that tyrants and orators do whatever they please or whatever they think best, but nothing that they want to do. The two men nearly come to blows over it, in the interlude (467B1–C4) between the first and second arguments. This interlude is set up when, at the end of the first argument, Socrates concludes, not as he perfectly well might have, with the question ‘How can orators and tyrants have great power?’, as per our little argument just above from (1) and (2) to (3); but rather with the question ‘How can orators and tyrants have great power – unless Polus refutes Socrates and shows that orators and tyrants do what they *want*? (that is, not just what they please or what seems best to them, which will be bad if they are ignorant, and so not power, at any rate by Polus’ lights)? Plato is evidently forcibly drawing our attention to the distinction because he regards it as central to his discussion overall.

The distinction – between doing what you want and doing what seems best – is argued for, and then used, in the second argument, starting at 467C5. What happens here is that Socrates draws attention to the means–end or teleological nature of all actions – we take unpleasant medicine for the sake of health, we undergo dangerous sea-voyages for the sake of wealth, and we do other things for the sake of wisdom. (This list of ends, consisting of health, wealth and wisdom, constitutes a conventional list of ends – things

⁴² An unstated assumption that has always made it easy for interpreters to accept this suggestion is that for [what philosophers have traditionally supposed to be] the *ordinary* sense of doing what one ‘wants’, one has to include cases of doing what merely *seems best*, but is not in fact best. This is the supposed sense employed by young Lysis in his childish conception of happiness: §1 above. We do not believe there is any reason to doubt that ordinary Greek speakers would have been at one with Lysis in – at any rate, mostly – granting that if you falsely believe something is good for you, you may still want it. But that is not to grant that ordinary Greek speakers are right on this point, nor is it to grant that there are such supposed ‘senses’ which determine what wanting *is*.

⁴³ So far as we know, Penner 1991 was the first to make the point that this passage says that all desire is for the *real* good – and that without appealing to any special sense of ‘want’; the first, at any rate, in the twentieth century. Boethius, in Book III of the *Consolatio Philosophiae*, evidently understood the point. (Rousseau’s ‘general will’ – the will of all when all will [what is in fact] the common good – abuts this notion of wanting, but tends to elicit talk, of the sort just referred to, of different senses for ‘wants’ and ‘really wants’.)

which Polus would grant are ends, though we know from other dialogues that Socrates himself does not regard either health or wealth as ultimate ends. Presumably they are allowed here only because they will improve Polus' understanding of the teleological point.)⁴⁴ Actions are all among the class of things done for the sake of ends. Accordingly, Socrates declares them to be things that are neither good nor bad, sometimes partaking in good, sometimes in bad, sometimes in neither, e.g. sitting, walking, running; other such objects – neither good nor bad – are, e.g. sticks and stones. Ends (such as health, wealth and wisdom) are good, their opposites are bad; actions, on the other hand, are all declared to be in the class of things neither good nor bad (because sometimes partaking in good, sometimes partaking in bad, sometimes partaking in neither).⁴⁵

No fewer than four times, Socrates tells us that we never want the action, only the end (the good) – in a fashion absolutely parallel to that in which he says in the *Lysis* that the ‘first friend’ is the only true or real friend, all other things being at best *said* to be friends, or being image-friends. Yet at the climax of the *Gorgias* passage, Socrates gives a remarkable explanation of the idea that we never want the action we do, only the end for the sake of which we do it. The passage runs as follows:

‘Surely, then, we have agreed that with things we do for the sake of something, we do not want them, but rather that for the sake of which we do them?’ – ‘Absolutely.’ – ‘We do not then want to slaughter, or exile from the city, or confiscate goods [these are the sorts of actions earlier attributed to orators and tyrants by Polus as illustrations of their great power] *thus simply* (*haplōs houtōs*), but if they are beneficial, we want to do them, and if harmful then we do not want to do them. For we want good things, as you yourself say, but the neither good nor bad things we do not want, nor do we want bad things.’ (468B8–C7)

It thus appears that every voluntary action flows from a desire for the really best end, and that if the action we did as a means to that end is not the really best means to that end, we did not want to do that action. The point is not that we did not want to do the action because all actions are means and not ends, and we only want ends – as implied in that four times asserted claim that

- g1. no one ever wants to do the action that they do, actions being neither good nor bad; they want only those *goods* (wisdom, health, wealth) for the sake of which they do their actions.

⁴⁴ On health, see esp. *Republic* IV, 444E–445B; on wealth, as well as *Lysis* 220A see e.g. *Euthydemus* 280A–281A, 288E–289A.

⁴⁵ On the use of the expression ‘neither good nor bad’ here, see n. 36 above. The apparent unclarity in that use will, we trust, be clarified by the following paragraphs in the main text.

Rather, the point is that we do not want to do the action because *it is not the really best means to our end*. And in fact

- G2. if an action turns out to have been beneficial, then we *did* want to do the action – though we did not want to do that action ‘*thus simply*’ (*haplōs houtōs*). Rather we wanted to do that action which is in fact the really best means to the really best end.

This of course still has an odd sound. Why say we wanted to do the action which is *in fact* the really best means to the really best end, rather than saying simply that we wanted to do the action *as* a means to (that is, *thinking of* the action as a means to) the end, though it was not in fact the best means to the end? This questioning of what Socrates is saying brings to mind the Fregean view that

- *F. when an action flows from a desire, it is the same desire to do the action regardless of whether the resulting action turns out optimally or sub-optimally.⁴⁶

But this view is repudiated in our *Gorgias* passage (466A–468E: first and second arguments, and interlude), which tells us that

- G3. when we do some action we want to do, we have a desire for what is really best, whereas when we do some action that merely seems best to us, we have no desire to do the action in question at all.

If we resist the Fregean impulse to say that it is the same desire to do the action regardless of how things turn out – regardless of whether the action is in fact the best means to the best end – we might think we need to treat the desire in the following disjunctive fashion: as either

- a. the desire for that action which is the really best means to the really best end,
- or as
- b. the desire that brings about the action actually done, in the false belief that that action is the really best means to the really best end.

(This is arguably Aristotle’s position in *Nicomachean Ethics* III.4.) But what the *Gorgias* says is that in the latter case the agent did not want to do the action in question. So there is no such desire. As we noted in Chapter 10, §4 above, Socrates still owes us an explanation: just what *does* bring about the action that is done when that action is not the really best action, if

⁴⁶ Frege 1892: 38. In Beaney 1997, the passage reads:

If, toward the end of the Battle of Waterloo, Wellington was glad that the Prussians were coming, the basis for his joy was a conviction. Had he been deceived, he would have been no less pleased, so long as his illusion lasted; and before he became so convinced he could not have been pleased that the Prussians were coming – even though in fact they might have been already approaching.

the agent didn't desire to do it? Our suggestion, on his behalf, was that what brings about the action in such a case is a certain incoherent desire, namely

- c. the desire to do that action which is both the really best means to the really best end, and also the action [falsely] believed to be that really best means.

This last desire (c) we suggested Plato might have called a *false* desire. So on that view, the right disjunction will rather be between (a) a desire for the really best means, on the one hand, and (c) a (false) desire which is for that action which is both the really best means and for the action the agent [falsely] *believes* to be the really best means.

Let us return to the difficulty that Socrates seems to contradict himself in maintaining both that we *never* want to do actions, and that we do want to do actions when they are in fact the best means to what is in fact the best end available to the agent. Our passage in the *Gorgias* appears to give us two alternatives. The first alternative is to say that Socrates here flatly contradicts the claim that we never want to do the means (actions), but only want the end. We *do*, after all, want the means in some cases. Since – in line with our normal strategy – we shall want to make Socrates contradict himself only as a last resort, we opt for the second alternative, which involves no such contradiction. On this second alternative, Socrates will allow that we can sometimes want to do a particular action. But now (along the lines of Penner 1991, but employing a new terminology) we draw a distinction between what is wanted *in itself* (ends only?) and what is wanted *in these particular circumstances* (certain actions, in those circumstances when they constitute the really best means to the really best end). This gives us that GIA. No one ever wants to do the action that they do *thus simply or for its own sake*; that action is *in itself* neither good nor bad; agents want *in itself* only those *goods* (wisdom, health, wealth)⁴⁷ for the sake of which they do their actions. But when the action has a good result then they do (as we might say) *in those circumstances* want to do it.

Had the remark to the effect that we *do* sometimes want to do the means ((G2) above) not shown up – in the immediate sequel to the four places in which it is asserted that we *never* want to do the means ((G1) above) – we could very easily have concluded that Socrates thought we never *in any way* desire to do any action. As it is, we have been rescued from this conclusion.⁴⁸ For we have been given a solution altering this claim to

⁴⁷ The list, again, is a list that Polus, not Socrates, would endorse: see above.

⁴⁸ We cannot resist the temptation to say that this should be something of a warning to those who cherry-pick passages for testimonia that then are supposed to show that Socrates accepts certain

the claim in (*GIA*) that while no one ever wants to do an action *for its own sake* or *in itself*, since only *ends* (or, as we shall see, something like ends) are desired *for their own sake* or *in themselves*; still in the case where the action turns out best, we do *in those circumstances* want to do the action.⁴⁹

* * *

We return now to the *Lysis*, and its claim that the ‘first friend’ is alone loved. That harsh-seeming claim, we propose, is to be read in the same way as the Socrates of the *Gorgias* turns out to want us to read his equally harsh initial claim that it is the end that is alone desired. We *do*, after all, want to do the action which is the really best means to the really best end; in the same way, we *do* love other things, not just the ‘first friend’. The key is the distinction we have proposed, between wanting/loving things *in themselves*, and wanting/loving them *in certain circumstances*. Let us suppose that the only thing we love *in itself* is the ‘first friend’. Why would that stop it being the case that one (say, *Lysis*) may love a person (say, *Menexenus*), *in given circumstances*: namely, those in which that person and his happiness are a really best means to the ‘first friend’?

Let us see if we can work with this parallel between *Lysis* and *Gorgias*. We start with what is explicit in the *Lysis*. This is that

- LI. What it is for *x* to love *y* = for the neither good nor bad to love (a) a certain unique and ultimate good, the ‘first friend’, not because of the bad, but simply (b) because of desire, where (c) what one loves one desires. In addition, (d) none of the other things we *say* we love (even if for the sake of something else) is a true or real friend, so that (presumably) nothing else is ever truly or really loved.

We may now try the hypothesis, following our discussion of the *Gorgias*, that Socrates had no intention of ruling out *some* usages of ‘*Lysis* loves *Menexenus*’, even though by the strict account, only the ‘first friend’ can be loved, and *Menexenus* is not the ‘first friend’. The hypothesis would be that Socrates was leaving it open, using the distinction between what is so *in itself* and what is so *in given circumstances*, that

propositions – without asking what on earth Socrates (or Plato) might have had in mind in the passage in question. The attribution to Socrates of the preposterous view that virtue is sufficient for happiness – sufficient to *guarantee* happiness – seems to us a clear case in point. (What? No matter what the hand life and luck has dealt him or her? Even if he or she is on the rack?)

⁴⁹ When Socrates speaks of not desiring actions *in themselves*, we may say he has his eye on action-types, or perhaps particular actions taken independently of their particular circumstances. When he speaks of particular actions as good *when they are in fact beneficial*, he is speaking of particular actions as done in the particular circumstances they are in fact done in. It is *this* action, *now*, which he is saying we desire, *if*, that is, it is the best means available.

LI-RV. What it is for *x* to love *y* = for the neither good nor bad to love
 (a) a certain unique and ultimate good, the 'first friend', *for its own sake* or *in itself*, not because of the bad, but simply (b) because of desire. In addition, (c) the other things we *say* we love (even if for the sake of something else) are not loved *for their own sakes* or *in themselves*, and so are not true or real friends. But (d) we can *in given circumstances* love a friend, a child, a dog, quails, wine or wisdom, namely, when they are in fact means to the 'first friend' which we love *for its own sake* or *in itself*.⁵⁰

What more than anything suggests that Socrates wants this revised version of (LI), (LI-RV), is that short passage about loving a lover at 221E7–222A7, where Socrates certainly seems to be speaking in his own person (. . . 'It's necessary, in that case, for the genuine lover, one who's not pretended, to be loved by his darling'). How could he *not* be speaking in his own person, at the very moment when he is rounding off his whole argument, and his demonstration to Hippothales of how a lover should speak to his beloved? And that passage may in turn reinforce our inclination to suppose that Socrates really *does* believe what he suggests at the very end of the dialogue: namely that he, Lysis and Menexenus are friends to each other.

But can we rely on this passage in the *Gorgias*? After all, apart from this passage of the *Gorgias*, Plato does not often have Socrates assert outright such things as 'You aren't doing what you want if your action isn't in fact best.' For a general response to this kind of objection, we refer to our methodological remarks in Chapter 10, §1 above (what we are concerned with, as we argued there, is with a whole *web of Socratic belief*, parts of which will be more visible in some places than in others). Still, there is no blinking the fact that one place where Socrates strikingly *does not* make that crucial claim about wanting is actually in the *Lysis*: indeed he lets it stand – in that initial discussion of parental love – that Lysis is doing what he wants if he merely does what he thinks best (though it is not in fact best). That is, it is allowed to stand that to think one wants something is to want it. Should we suppose, then, that Socrates would allow this assumption on Lysis' part to stand as a permissible liberalization of (LI-RV)? To do so would be to allow the addition of a further clause to (LI-RV), namely:

*e. we can also be *said* to love friends, children, dogs, quails, wine and wisdom when they are merely *believed* – even if falsely – to be the means to the 'first friend' which we love *for its own sake* or *in itself*.

⁵⁰ Cf. 220D4–7 where, in raising the possibility that the good is only desired as a cure for bad, Socrates asks 'Does the good have no use for its own sake?' The implication seems to be that if the possibility in question is ruled out, then the good does 'have a use for its own sake'. Such a locution makes sense on the view we are proposing – and not much sense from the modern moralist's point of view.

Our own very firm view is that this clause should not be added – even though, of course, its addition would not only be permitted by Aristotle and by almost all modern philosophers, but even insisted on. Lysis himself would insist on it, at least in that initial conversation of his with Socrates, since he assumes that to *think* you want something is to want it. But that, as we have said, is the ultimate source of the ‘childish’ conception of happiness he favours. And if that conception of happiness fails (as we assume it must, on any account), then so too must an account of friendship fail that makes it enough to *think* one loves someone or something.⁵¹

But then what *would* Socrates say about the sort of case where one falsely believes that someone one calls a friend is good for one? If it is not a case of love, what is it? Our proposal is that Socrates might call them cases of ‘false love’ – by analogy with false pleasures, or with what we might call doing what you falsely want, though Socrates calls the latter type of case ‘doing what seems best’. This would account both for why most people *think* there is love in this case; and also for Socrates’ apparently wanting to say that this is not love.⁵²

We are now close to completing task (d). Despite his implication that children, dogs and so on are not true or real friends (that they are even ‘image-friends’: 219D3–4), Socrates’ point is not – we claim – that they are not loved at all. It is merely that they are not loved *for their own sakes*, or *in themselves* (that is, in entire abstraction from whatever their particular circumstances might be). This opens the way for two hypotheses: first, that if Menexenus (and the securing of Menexenus’ happiness) is *on this present occasion* a really best means to the securing of Lysis’ happiness, then we may say that Lysis loves Menexenus *in such circumstances*; and, second, that if Hippothales (and the securing of Hippothales’ happiness) is on the present occasion *falsely believed* by Lysis to be a means to the securing of Lysis’ happiness, then Lysis does not love Hippothales, even though we may say he has a *false* love for Hippothales. (Actually, we have no reason to suppose that Lysis has any positive attitude at all towards Hippothales, but the example will serve.)

⁵¹ See *Republic* 1, 334B–335B, where the friend is not someone *believed* to be good for one (even if falsely believed to be so), but rather someone who *is* good for one (and even if one does not know that the person is good for one).

⁵² On ‘false love’, see above (text to n. 17). Notice how this way of speaking allows for Socrates’ distinction at 222A6–7 among those one calls one’s friends or lovers between one’s *genuine* friends or lovers – those for whom one’s concern is in fact a means to the ‘first friend’ – and *pretended* friends or lovers – for whom one’s concern is not in fact a means to the ‘first friend’. Pretended lovers are not after all lovers – though those who speak with the vulgar may *call* them lovers.

There is, however, one thing missing from our account of the way in which Lysis and Menexenus might be friends: we are as yet very far from having clarified what is going on with expressions like ‘for its own sake’ and ‘in itself’ in Plato.⁵³ Part of the problem is the contamination caused by the attachment of most modern moral philosophers to the view that we love our children or our friends *for their own sakes*. This attachment begins with Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Butler, Hume, Kant and Sidgwick, and continues on into the twentieth century and beyond, in most modern philosophers. Such thinkers are inclined to reject out of hand any theory that has the consequence of making us not love our children ‘*for their own sakes*’ (taken as saying *independently of all concern for one’s own good*).⁵⁴ We discuss briefly the question of how to respond to these thinkers in Chapter 12 below under ‘unfinished business’. We (Penner and Rowe), however, nevertheless follow Socrates in wishing to defend the theory that it is enough for it to be true that we (as we say) love our children or our friends that they are means to our own happiness – this, even though it may seem to put our children and our friends on a par with mere commodities, these too being (at any rate sometimes and in some circumstances) means to our happiness. The difference between our children and (say) our hi-fi equipment is that, as we put it in the previous chapter (§3, pp. 224–5), our children and friends are ‘at very nearly the highest level of means to our own good’, while our hi-fi equipment will be a much lower-level means – if it is a means at all.

We begin, then, by trying to determine more accurately what dialogues like the *Lysis* and the *Gorgias* envisage when they speak of what is ‘*for its own sake*’ and ‘*in itself*: not, on our view (as will already be clear) any kind of *intrinsic* good – as this is understood in modern times.

8 ON WHAT IS GOOD IN ITSELF OR DESIRED FOR ITS OWN SAKE

What is it to love or desire something ‘*for its own sake*’ or to find something good ‘*in itself*’? What the use of these phrases has done for us so far is to

⁵³ It is true that our contrast between ‘*in itself*’ and ‘*in given circumstances*’ – however justified it may be by what the *Gorgias* passage says – tends to insinuate the idea that ‘*in itself*’ stands for ‘*in all circumstances*’, or, more briefly, ‘*always*’; it is also true that that is the line we shall take with ‘*in itself*’. But this is not the natural reaction of moderns when they hear the phrase (see below). This accounts for the effort expended on a more hard-working reading of ‘*in itself*’ in the next section, which might otherwise seem disproportionate.

⁵⁴ See on Vlastos 1969 in Chapter 10, §3 above.

enable us to see that Socrates will have certain options open to him if he can make out a distinction that will enable him simultaneously to say that

OWNSAKE 1. there is one ultimate good (the ‘first friend’) that alone is desired or loved – ‘in itself’ – in all desire or all love;

while at the same time

OWNSAKE 2. other things we *say* are ‘desired’ or ‘loved’ may be desired or loved *in given circumstances* – i.e. when they are in fact the best means to the ‘first friend’. But *even in these particular circumstances*, we may not say that these means are loved or desired either for their own sakes or *simpliciter* (‘thus simply’, as Socrates puts it at *Gorgias* 468c3; see §7 above). For it is one thing to be desired in itself, another to be, *in certain circumstances*, the means which in fact lead to the only thing good in itself, namely, the ‘first friend’.

However in resorting to the verbal device of allowing ‘for its own sake’ only of the ‘first friend’, one may seem to be jumping from the frying pan into the fire. For, as already noted (Chapter 10, nn. 25, 26), phrases of the sort ‘for its own sake’ and ‘in itself’ are likely immediately to suggest, to moderns, a reference to what is intrinsically good. Now the notion of intrinsic good is, for most moderns, when they are being most candid about their positions, shorthand for *moral* good; and it is constitutive of moral good that something may be morally good without its involving any considerations of advantage, or good *for* anyone. Understood like this, the ‘intrinsically good’ then tends to be imported into any and every discussion of motivation; and this is particularly damaging in a Socratic/Platonic context, in that being ‘intrinsically good’ has a surplus value, so to speak, over and above such purely psychological (Socratic) claims as that we all *in fact* always aim at whatever it is that is our ultimate good or end. This surplus value consists in the fact that talk of an intrinsic good is *normative* or *moral* talk – compatible with a good which may come into conflict with the agent’s own happiness (unless that happiness is so re-defined that it isn’t happiness if it isn’t in accordance with morality).

This last parenthesis – about re-defining happiness in such a way that it doesn’t count as ‘happiness’ unless it is in accordance with morality – needs explanation. There are interpreters – most notably Terence Irwin – who admit that in dialogues like the *Republic* and the *Lysis*, Socrates will insist that, as a matter of fact, what is good in itself makes us happiest. This is paradoxical if we take the good-in-itself to be the intrinsic good,

i.e. the moral good, and so to be capable of coming into conflict with the agent's own happiness.⁵⁵ The paradox is removed by making it part of the meaning of 'happiest' that it involves acting morally. We may call the result of this treatment – actually a re-definition – of happiness 'moral happiness'. (Irwin, the inventor and most distinguished proponent of this notion, does not use any such expression.) Such suspect manoeuvring makes it the case both that

*^{MH.} being morally good – understood as requiring independence from the agent's own happiness – nevertheless makes us happy,

and that

*^{IG.} the intrinsic good is a moral good.

At this point, morality is declared to be no longer a means to happiness, but a *part* or *ingredient* of happiness – a part which, even though not itself identical with happiness, may itself be desired *in itself* or *for its own sake*. From here it is a short step to insisting that all, including Socrates, must recognize the fundamental importance of a distinction between instrumental good and intrinsic good, or the distinction between being an instrumental means and an ingredient, or the distinction between being good merely as a means to the ultimate end and being good as a (necessary) moral part of the ultimate end.⁵⁶

To import this modern notion of intrinsic good into the interpretation of Plato and Aristotle seems to us entirely anachronistic. Some far simpler notion of 'for its own sake' and 'in itself' is required. Thus we shall resist

⁵⁵ There might seem to be several different ways of understanding the relationship of morality to happiness. One which is ruled out, however, at least from the point of view of the *usual* construals of morality, is that you adopt morality for the sake of the happiness you will get from it. In that sort of case, morality would not be chosen *for its own sake*, but rather for the sake of happiness, and so would not count as morality at all. See here Prichard 1928, his great inaugural lecture, 'Duty and interest', some of which we think deeply right (the part that suspects Plato of the very view about one's own happiness which Kant set his face against), and some of which we think deeply wrong (the part that says that the Greek words for 'just' and 'unjust' mean *morally good* and *morally bad* in the *Republic*; on which we note without further comment that Waterfield's translation actually renders those Greek words in terms of morality and immorality). A second option is that in a strenuous act of concentration, you don't think about happiness at all, but just think about being moral. Then you get happiness – in the spirit of 'But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you' (Matthew 6: 32). We ourselves doubt this is any more possible than intending to stand in a corner and not think of a white bear. But perhaps there are others more able to partition their minds consciously into parts they allow to be conscious and parts they do not allow to be conscious. There remains Irwin's suggestion – that leaving aside the question whether or not you think of gaining happiness of the usual sort by being moral, 'happiness' should be so defined that if you are not moral you are not happy.

⁵⁶ We are disposed to wonder what exactly is supposed to be accomplished by re-defining happiness so that if one is happy one is therefore moral (or by declaring morality a formal cause of happiness). Cf. Frege's characteristically caustic remark, contra certain mathematical definitions, to the effect that one might as well make a lazy boy industrious by redefining the word 'industrious'.

attempts to employ any such ideas of the intrinsically good end or the merely instrumental means (as contrasted with some other relation to an end). As we see it, whatever contributes to that whole which represents an agent's maximum available happiness in his or her particular circumstances is a means to that maximum available happiness, whether one calls it an instrumental means or an ingredient – and whether one calls it an instrumental means or a part.

But is there not a basis for distinguishing between a mere means and a part? We (Penner and Rowe) think not. Our reason is connected with a point made earlier (in Chapter 4) about self-sufficiency. It is this. Given the catch-as-catch-can nature of the maximum *available* happiness *in particular circumstances* – the *circumstances* are catch-as-catch-can, as are what actions are *available*: these are to some considerable degree matters of luck, that is, matters of where one started off in life, and how events outside one's control impinge on one's life – we do not expect there to be any things or kinds of things which are necessarily or even universally parts of an agent's maximum available happiness in his or her particular circumstances. We are thinking here of the usual suspects, for example, 'contemplation', or 'reflection': *theoria*, as this shows up in Aristotle's account of the best life. It may be true of *ideal* happiness – which Aristotle seems all too frequently to be discussing, in violation of his claims to be discussing the *practicable* good – that reflective activity is, for the appropriate individual, a necessary part of his or her ideal happiness. That might even get us a distinction between instrumental means and parts or ingredients (by way of the distinctions between movements and actualizations, or between makings and doings; or, to put it more simply, by way of a distinction between the activity itself and such other things as make the activity possible). But Aristotle will surely admit, in those places where he is more firmly rooted in a concern for *practicable* happiness, that even for people ideally suited to a life of thought, their circumstances may make other things more important than things which would be indisputably most important in ideal circumstances. Take again our example in Chapter 4. In a particular case reflection may best be engaged in merely as a means to the calmness required for some goal that, in the agent's particular circumstances, is the higher goal of securing money for an operation on a loved one – where, in this agent's circumstances, the saving of the life or health of the loved one is the higher good, since the suffering and death of the loved one (especially when avoidable) would be admitted by Aristotle to be capable of destroying happiness. It follows that reflection, of the kind appropriate to Aristotle's best life, is not a necessary means to *practicable* happiness. We see no reason to think that – for

Aristotle – any particular action or any particular desideratum can be singled out as a necessary or universal means, and so as a part of, or ingredient of, the agent's practicable happiness.⁵⁷

We conclude that there can be no distinction between instrumental means and parts (or ingredients). This must be so, given that the maximum happiness available to one in one's particular circumstances, over a complete life, is always a compromise of some sort brought on by that very particularity of the circumstances.⁵⁸ So how – in more detail – do we (Penner and Rowe) intend to read the phrases 'desired for its own sake', or 'good in itself', which we have been speaking of as needed in the accounts of love and desire in the *Lysis* and the *Gorgias*? Evidently we need to start all over again.

We shall make this fresh start by looking at a passage we have already referred to briefly in Chapter 4. This passage offers a close parallel to our passages in the *Lysis* and *Gorgias*, and also happens to focus on the idea of things good in themselves. The passage is at *Euthydemus* 281D2–E5, and may be summarized as follows:

- ει. none of the things that we said were good things [wealth, health, good looks, good birth, political power, high office, temperance, justice, courage] are good in themselves; wisdom is the only good thing, folly the only bad thing.

Just as only one thing is 'truly' or 'really' *loved* in the *Lysis* (219C5–D2, 220A7–B3), and only one thing is *wanted in itself* in the *Gorgias* (the ultimate good, once we have dispensed with Polus' bogus candidates for the good), so too, it turns out, only one thing is *good* (or *good in itself, auto kath' hauto*) in the *Euthydemus*. How can this be? Of course if we construe 'good in itself' in this passage as *intrinsic* good, and then understand what is intrinsically good as what is *morally* good, that would remove the strangeness of (ει) – at least if we could buy into the conception of moral good that would be involved in the idea that only wisdom is morally good. But this interpretation will prove quite untenable. For the failed candidates for good things in this context are not things anyone would suppose are *morally* good things or

⁵⁷ Wiggins 1980 tries to finesse this by suggesting that ingredients of happiness might be not single characteristics, but disjunctions or conjunctions of such characteristics. This seems to us something of a fudge. For it is not clear why this sort of thing could not be done with, for example, health or wealth or good looks, or even going to the dentist, quite as well as it is done with *thèoria* ('reflection', 'contemplation'). But then where has this distinction between instrumental and ingredient means gone? We take it that Mabbott 1971[1937] and Korsgaard 1999 are in the same predicament as Wiggins, in their suggestion that health is an intrinsic and not an instrumental good.

⁵⁸ As we think that even Aristotle would admit, once we pointed out to him that some of the things he says about (successful) actualization of our best capacities apply only to ideal happiness, and do not apply to practicable happiness.

even failed candidates for being morally good things. Rather, they are those good things possession (or use) of which will (one might suppose) *lead to happiness* (278E3–279A4, 281B2–8, 289C6–9, D8–10): wealth, health, good looks, high office and so on. Look only at how this passage as a whole (the ‘first protreptic’ of the *Euthydemus*) begins (278E3):

‘Surely all people desire to do well [= be happy]. Or is this question one of those questions of the sort I was fearing just now that are most ridiculous? For it’s surely (*dēpou*) mindless to ask such things. What person does not want to do well?’ – ‘There’s no one who doesn’t want to do well,’ said Cleinias. – ‘Well, then,’ I said, ‘since we all want to do well, mustn’t the next thing be to ask: how might we do well? Surely it will be if we have many good things? Or are we now being even more simple-minded than before? For I suppose it is clear that this is so.’ – He agreed. – ‘Come on, then, what sorts of things (*poia . . . tōn ontōn*) are goods for us?’

The good things in question here are good things the having of which will make us happy. That is, they are things the having of which is a means to happiness. The passage continues by arguing that being wealthy, being healthy, being beautiful, good birth, power, honours, being temperate, just and courageous are good things of the sort in question. Socrates then adds two more things, wisdom and good luck, to the list. No, wait! Stop press. Only one thing. For wisdom is good luck, since wisdom alone is such that anything done with it, because it avoids error, gets (the maximum of) good luck.⁵⁹ He then says, of all the other good things besides wisdom, that they do not lead to happiness unless they benefit us (280B5–9). For this, we must use them – and use them rightly (280E3–4). To use them not rightly makes them bad for you rather than good for you, and if you are going to use them not wisely, you are better off not using them at all, in which case they are again not good, but merely neither good nor bad (280E6–281A1). With any of the so-called good things, if knowledge leads – here knowledge (*epistēmē*), that is, knowledge of *the good*, is being used interchangeably with wisdom (*sophia, phronēsis*) – they are used rightly.

Now, as we have just seen, Socrates is also prepared to put this point in terms of good luck. His grounds are that one’s luck is best in any area *A* when one pursues one’s goals with knowledge of *A*. This in fact leads Socrates to express his point more broadly as follows:

⁵⁹ We shall not be discussing good luck here, except in relation to two points. (1) Note the comparatives at 279E5, 280A4; this is connected with the notion of ‘maximizing’ (‘the maximum *available* happiness’, and so on) – as also is the talk of good luck. The maximum of good luck will be the maximum that you can get, starting from the position that luck has placed you in. (2) ‘Wisdom is good luck’: we shall shortly be discussing the compatibility of ‘*z* is identical with *u*’ with ‘*z* causes *u*’.

E2. Knowledge [= wisdom], it seems, provides not just good luck (*eutuchia*) but happiness (*eupragia*) to humans – and does so in connection with whatever possession and whatever action (281B2–4).

(Notice at this point how Socrates seems prepared to use interchangeably

E3a. wisdom *is* good luck (279D6),

and, here in 281B,

E3b. knowledge/wisdom *provides* good luck,

though with respect to happiness, he only says that

E4. wisdom provides or causes happiness.

Readers will not be so surprised, perhaps, when we claim in section II that Socrates would also be prepared to affirm that wisdom *is* happiness.)

At 281D2–E5, Socrates draws the following conclusion:

'In sum,' I said, 'it looks like this, Cleinias: as for all the things which at first we said are good, our argument concerning them is not this – that they are by nature good in themselves (*auta ge kath' hauta*). Rather this appears to be how things stand: that if ignorance leads them, they are greater bads than their opposites, to the extent that they are more able to serve what leads, it being bad, while if intelligence (*phronēsis*) and wisdom (*sophia*) lead, they are greater goods, but in themselves (*auta de kath' hauta*) neither of them [= neither those things that are good when wisdom leads, nor those that are bad when ignorance leads] is worth anything.' – 'It seems to be as you say,' he said. – 'What then is the consequence of what has been said? Is it anything other than that of all the other [supposedly good] things, none is either good *or* bad, but as to these two things, wisdom is good, ignorance bad?' – He agreed.

We see from this that

E5a. what it is for wisdom always – whatever the particular circumstances – to be good in itself, and ignorance to be bad in itself, is for wisdom to produce greater good when it leads, and for ignorance to produce worse things when it leads,

while

E5b. what it is for health, wealth, and so forth *not* to be good in themselves or bad in themselves is for them not always – not in every circumstance – to produce good, and not always to produce bad.

What we see here is that the talk of wisdom being the only thing good in itself in (E1) is *not* to be the effect that

*E6. wisdom is the only thing that is intrinsically good (if intrinsic good is either *moral* good, or even good *not as a means to some other good*).

Rather, as our considerations about what the failed candidates are candidates *at show*, what (E1) is saying is clearly that, if we may so put it,

E7. wisdom is the only thing good in itself as a means to happiness. For as 281B2–4 tells us – the lines are translated just above, and presented as (E4) – what wisdom does is to *provide* happiness.

This is quite a nasty shock for the modern reader. How can something be *good in itself as a means to happiness*? And even if we could understand that odd-looking idea, why couldn't the same be said of lots of other things – that they are 'good in themselves as means to happiness'? Why, indeed, isn't *any* particular action that in fact leads to happiness *good in itself as a means to happiness*?

Let us try to offer an explanation of the idea of *being good in itself as a means to happiness*. How can we make wisdom both good in itself and good as a means? We suggest that the passages quoted above and the formulations we have offered of what those passages say yield immediately the point that

E8. wisdom is the only thing that is *always* a means to happiness. If *not* good in itself = not always being a means to good, but sometimes producing good, sometimes producing bad, sometimes producing what is neutral or neither, then it would be natural to infer that being good in itself should be (or at any rate cover) *being always a means to good*.

Notice the complete absence of moral and modal terms in this account of *good in itself*.⁶⁰ Similarly non-moral and non-modal versions can be given of the parallel locutions in the *Lysis*. Thus we now read (LI–RV) as follows:

L8. What it is for *x* to love *y* is for the neither good nor bad to love (a) a certain unique and ultimate good, the 'first friend', *always*; not because of the bad, but simply (b) because of desire. In addition, (c) nothing else is *always* loved. But (d) we *can sometimes* love friends, children, dogs, quails, wine, wisdom, when they are in fact a means to the 'first friend' which we *always* love.

Similarly, the claim in the *Gorgias* that

*G1. no one ever wants to do the action that they do *thus simply or for its own sake*; actions are *in themselves* neither good nor bad; the agents want *in themselves* only those *goods* (wisdom, health, wealth) for the sake of which they do their actions,

when corrected to count only wisdom as a thing good in itself (see §7 above) becomes the claim that

⁶⁰ We take it that, whatever the practice of modern logicians, temporality – being always or only sometimes a certain way – is not enough for the kind of morality or modality that moral philosophers wish to attach to the intrinsically good.

- G4. no one ever wants to do the action that they do in this particular case *always*, since such actions are not either always good or always bad – wisdom alone being always good (being the only thing that is always a means to happiness).

That (G4) is what the *Gorgias* envisages is made firm by the grounds on which actions are classified as not good in themselves but rather neither good nor bad: namely that actions *sometimes* partake in the good, *sometimes* partake in the bad, *sometimes* partake in neither (*Gorgias* 467E6–468A3). The point can only be that to be *neither good nor bad* is to be something (or, perhaps, something of the kind) that is neither always good nor always bad, but rather something (or something of that kind) that is sometimes (in some circumstances) good, sometimes (in some circumstances) bad. By parity of reasoning, being good in itself, as wisdom is, will then naturally be taken as being always good – in all circumstances good.

Combining the point in the *Lysis* and the *Gorgias* would give us quite naturally that

- G5. no one ever wants to do the action they do as a means to happiness *always*, since such actions are not always means to happiness – wisdom alone being always good as a means to happiness.

This reading of ‘thus simply’ (*haplōs houtōs*) at 468C3, and in (*G1), receives pleasing confirmation from *Republic* 1, 331CI–5, where Socrates asks Cephalus if he really thinks justice is truth-telling and giving back what one has borrowed thus simply (*haplōs houtōs*), or whether these very [actions] are themselves sometimes justly done, sometimes unjustly? (This is followed by the famous example of the suicidal friend who wants his sharp knife back.) What is important here is that *haplōs houtōs*, being contrasted with ‘sometimes justly, sometimes unjustly’, must be taken as ‘always’ – as we have just been proposing.⁶¹

We have now, therefore, we take it, clarified the situation asked about in task (D) – which was to explain how it could be that the ‘first friend’ is the only thing truly or really loved. Following clues from the *Gorgias*, and then from the *Euthydemus*, we have suggested that a thing’s being *truly or really loved* is to be explained in terms of its being loved *in itself*, and that that in turn is to be explained in terms of its being *always* loved. This gives us what we formulated above as:

- L8. What it is for *x* to love *y* is for the neither good nor bad to love (a) a certain unique and ultimate good, the ‘first friend’, *always*; not because

⁶¹ Compare also n. 50 above, on (*Lysis*) 220D4–7 and the idea of something’s being ‘useful for its own sake’.

of the bad, but simply (b) because of desire. In addition, (c) nothing else is *always* loved. But (d) we *can sometimes* – on selected occasions – love friends, children, dogs, quails, wine, wisdom, when they are in fact a means to the ‘first friend’ which we *always* love.

Such is our account of desiring the ‘first friend’ *in itself*. The chief uncertainty that remains here is the further identification of the ‘first friend’ itself: is it happiness? Or wisdom (knowledge of the good)? Or is it the Form of the Good? So far, our account of ‘*in itself*’ and ‘*for its own sake*’ leaves all three with a chance of being the correct candidate for the ‘first friend’. Before we turn to that question, however, we should return to the question of just exactly what the relation is between the three principal subject-matters of the *Lysis*: *philia*, *erōs* and desire. This may look like something of a digression; but a clearer view of the relation in question will, we think, make it easier to appreciate the line we shall take in §§10–11 below as to the identity of the ‘first friend’.

9 THE RELATION BETWEEN *PHILIA* ('FRIENDSHIP'), *ERŌS* ('PASSION', 'ROMANTIC LOVE'), AND *EPITHUMIA* ('DESIRE') IN THE *LYSIS*

It should be tolerably clear what sort of proposal we are about to make. We believe that while Socrates holds that the basic structure of love or friendship, being in love and desire is the same – that of the neither good nor bad desiring the ultimate good (the ‘first friend’, whether that happens to be happiness, knowledge, the Form of the Good or some other thing altogether) – there is room within the way we specify the hierarchy of means to ends presupposed in the account to be given of the ‘first friend’ for features that will differentiate love (or friendship) from being in love and from desire itself. We propose that

- 1.9. what it is for Lysis to be friend to Menexenus (i.e., for Lysis to love Menexenus) is for him to believe truly that the good of Menexenus is a high-level means to his own ultimate good (the ‘first friend’).
- 1.10. What it is for Socrates to be in love with Alcibiades is for him to believe truly that the good of Alcibiades, to be achieved by a romantic relationship with him, is a high-level means to his own ultimate good (the ‘first friend’).⁶²

⁶² Cf., e.g., *Phaedrus* 237D3–4 (*erōs* as a kind of *epithumia* or desire); 249A2 (the true lover will *paiderastein meta philosophias*, ‘engage in boy-love accompanied by philosophy’), 257B5–6 (conducting one’s life quite simply (*haplōs*) in relation to *erōs* with philosophical discussions or arguments (*logoi*)). (For Socrates and Alcibiades, see the penultimate act of the *Symposium*.)

The idea of the ‘high-level’ means (cf. Chapter 10, §4 above, where we spoke of ‘higher-level’, and ‘highest-level’ means) is that – e.g. – the good of Menexenus – Lysis’ closest friend – shows up as rather a major premiss in all calculations of the good for Lysis. And the difference of *philia* from *erōs* is given by the difference between the kinds of means involved in (L9) and (L10) – both being different from simpler cases of desiring the good, such as when one desires some water or some tabouli.⁶³ For now, the point is that we do not believe there is any case for taking it that Socrates thinks desire, being in love, and friendship or love are all the same thing – as if we could say that the dialogue isn’t about friendship or being in love at all *as we understand those notions*,⁶⁴ but merely about desire for good. Rather all three are distinct, though desire for good is an underlying structure in each of the other two.

Let us now elaborate a little on the additional structure we have attributed to friendship and *erōs* as viewed by Socrates in the *Lysis*. The general upshot of his opening discussion with Lysis is that

Kn7. Lysis needs knowledge, without which nothing (i.e., no good thing he desires) will belong to him, everything being alien to him. Without knowledge, neither mother nor father, nor those who belong to him (his familiars, anyone who is, by extension, ‘one of the family’), nor anyone else will allow anything to belong to him, and he will not be happy.

(What ‘belongs’ is what is *oikeion*, or what is one’s own, ours: see 210B5, c4, with d2.) Then, later, when Socrates arrives at the conclusion (s6) that

⁶³ The point of speaking of a *high-level* (or *higher-level*) means emerges if one considers the possibility (pointed out to us, in different versions, by Paula Gottlieb and Antonio Rauti) that the welfare of one’s spouse and children depends upon the happiness of a tyrant who has them in his power, and whom one *does not love*. So you desire the tyrant’s happiness, as a means to your own good, but you do not love him. However this desire for the happiness of the tyrant is circumscribed by the peculiar circumstance of his having your loved ones in his power. His happiness is thus not a high-level means to your good. You would not be taking up the position that no matter what your circumstances were, the happiness of the tyrant comes very high on your list of means to your happiness.

⁶⁴ There is a large question being raised here by the phrase ‘as we [moderns] understand these notions’. On the one hand there are the conceptions we moderns have about love (Plato’s *philia*) *erōs*, and desire. If one thought love, *erōs* and desire were as these modern conceptions take them to be, then one would surely have to say that the *Lysis* was about desire for good, and not at all either about love or *eros*, since these conceptions are so different from each other. On the other hand there is the question whether (a) what people want to talk about when they use such words as ‘love’ or ‘passion’ (*erōs*) is just whatever is determined by their conceptions, or whether (b) people are generally sensible enough to know that the things they want to talk about are often enough not in accordance with their conceptions. In that case, what they will want to talk about is the real nature of love or passion, even if what those real natures are differs from what is in accordance with their conceptions. (Even if love and being in love should turn out to be species of the desire for good.) It is the latter view that we take (see Chapter 10, n. 3 and elsewhere), and if such a view is taken, then we can easily enough see that the *Lysis* is about all three of love, *erōs* and desire for good, and that they are each distinct from the other, close though the underlying structure to all three is.

the neither good nor bad loves the ‘first friend’ because of desire, he spells that out too in terms of belonging, *oikeiōtēs* (221D6–222A3, 222B3–D8). The spelling-out is along these lines:

L11a. we desire, and love, and are in love with, what we need,
where

L11b. what we need is what we are deprived of, i.e. what belongs to us,
and (though the boys fail to see this)

L11c. what belongs to all of us (and what we are nevertheless deprived of)
is what is good for us (222C3–5; cf. *Symposium* 205D10–206A12).

But now

L11d. if Menexenus and Lysis are friends, they in a way naturally belong
to each other,

and

L11e. there is no *philia*, *erōs* or desire for good between the lover and the
beloved, unless the lover by nature in a way belongs to the darling
either in soul, or in ‘some characteristic, ways or form’ of soul (221E7–
222A3).

We note that not only the good, but also the lover is here said to belong to the darling. In the terminology we have proposed, the good would be loved *in itself*, while the lover would be loved *in these circumstances* – i.e. for as long as the lover is a high-level means to the good of the darling.

Why is it the lover that is here said to be loved, rather than the darling? (The ‘darling’, after all, is literally ‘the one loved’, or rather, the one the lover is in love with: the *erōmenos*, where this is a passive participle.) We believe that the philosophical answer to this question⁶⁵ emerges just below, in the reference to the genuine lover at 222A6–7. What is being talked about here in the *Lysis* is not just anything moderns or even fifth-century Greeks would *call* love or *erōs*, but rather the love singled out in clause (L8) above, and the appropriate analogue for *erōs*. So the genuine lover is singled out because *he is the source of good*. Why is he the source of good? Because what distinguishes the genuine lover from other supposed lovers, the ‘pretended’ ones, is either the possession of knowledge, or, better (since no one *does* possess knowledge),⁶⁶ the possession of what will help

⁶⁵ There is also, of course, another answer to the question, one that relates to the dramatic action of the dialogue. More specifically, this second answer will relate to what is needed for the demonstration to the lover Hippothales – which is something that will seem to give him everything he dreamed of, while actually giving him less than nothing (see Part I, Chapter 6 above).

⁶⁶ Well, Socrates doesn’t – and if he doesn’t, who does? (The conclusion of his search – as related in the *Apology* – for someone wiser than himself is that there is no such person.) But even apart from this consideration, we already know that there are no self-sufficiently good people around (see below, and Chapter 5, §D above, on 220D5–6); and the self-sufficiently good person is the wise person (cf. 218A2–B3).

the beloved to acquire knowledge. (That is, the genuine lover will be a *philosopher*.) This fits precisely what we found in our account of Lysis' need for knowledge in (Kn7) just above. And that account also confirms the view that the 'characteristic, ways or form of soul' at 222A3, represented in (LIIe) above, also have to do with knowledge, and the search for knowledge.

Returning now to the point that two things are here said to 'belong' to the darling (the good and the lover), we infer that the belonging of friends to each other has something to do with the good they desire for each other. There is the good each desires for himself, as per (LIIa), (LIIb) and (LIIc); and there is the identification of knowledge as the good in (Kn7). And the belonging of lovers and friends to each other in their souls (or in qualities of soul) in (LIIe) and (LIIId)⁶⁷ is a belonging with respect to the quality of soul which is knowledge, or the propensity for searching for this knowledge. Hence, we propose, the way friends belong to each other is, if not in their knowledge, at least in their propensity to seek such knowledge together (as in fact Lysis and Menexenus have been doing for some time by the end of the *Lysis* – along with Socrates).⁶⁸

We have suggested indeed (in Chapter 6 above) that

Kn8. the reason Lysis falls silent at 222A4, at the suggestion that the beloved must belong to the darling 'either in relation to the soul', etc., is that he sees something of what is coming. He has an inkling, in a way that Menexenus does not, that what is good has to do with knowledge; and as for knowledge, he must be prepared to seek it wherever he can find it – including from the genuine lover (rather than just from his friend Menexenus).

The idea, then, is this. Lysis' love for Menexenus is to be understood as follows:

Kn9. what it is for Lysis to be friend to Menexenus (to love Menexenus) is for Lysis to believe (truly) that the good of Menexenus is a high-level means to the good for Lysis himself, which good consists in the pursuing of the knowledge which will make Lysis happy;

which is itself an elaboration of

L9. what it is for Lysis to be friend to Menexenus is for him to believe (truly) that the good of Menexenus is a high-level means to his own ultimate good (the 'first friend').

⁶⁷ As in Chapter 6 above, we assume that the 'belonging' between friends must relate to the same things as the 'belonging' between lover and beloved ('either in relation to the soul or in relation to some characteristic of the soul, or ways or form', 222A3); nothing at all has been said to make the two cases relevantly different.

⁶⁸ Cf. (again) 223B6–7 '(people will say) we think that we're friends of one another – for I count myself too as one of you ...'

10 THE FURTHER IDENTIFICATION OF THE 'FIRST FRIEND'⁶⁹

It is time now to present our main evidence for the claim that Socrates wants us to identify the 'first friend' with knowledge – though of course all of (Kn1) and (Kn3)–(Kn9), not to mention (E1)–(E3), and (E5), strongly suggest it. This evidence consists in the discussion of *presence* in the long, and apparently superfluous, discussion at 217C2–218C1 (the two ways in which white may be present in our hair: see §5 above). What is the point of this passage, given that – as we pointed out in §5 – the claim Socrates ends up with at 218C1–2 is one he already had to hand at 217B4–C2 even without the discussion of presence? The claim is that the neither good nor bad loves the good because of the presence of the bad – present, that is, in a way that doesn't make it, the neither-good-nor-bad, itself bad. But it hardly takes much to see *that* point: if it were bad, it would no longer be neither-good-nor-bad. So why do we need a whole Stephanus page about it? (Socrates allows plenty of other, considerably more difficult, ideas to flash past us in the *Lysis*; why so gentle an approach to this particular, and rather simple, idea?)

Our proposal is this. While the examples of 'friends' that go on recurring in the whole context, i.e. the doctor and health ('friends' of the sick), will ultimately be treated as not being real or true friends at all (because even *health* is a 'friend for the sake of something': 219C2–3), the chief function of the apparently superfluous – or over-lengthy – discussion of *presence* is to introduce another example of a 'friend' that is not, cannot be, and is designed not to be dismissed in that way. This new example, of course, is knowledge or wisdom.

At 217E6–218A2, Socrates lays out the key claims about the difference between the bad and the neither good nor bad (material merely repeating 217B4–C2):

So then, when it isn't bad yet, but bad is present, *this* sort of presence makes it desire the good; but the presence that makes a thing bad deprives it at one and the same time both of its desire for the good and of its friendship for the good. For it isn't any longer neither good nor bad, but bad, and we agreed bad wasn't friend to good.

He then draws a consequence for a new set of ostensible examples of (1) the good, (2) the neither good nor bad, and (3) the bad. This new set of examples, as opposed to the set of examples otherwise used throughout

⁶⁹ Subtitle (to the section): 'How Plato intends us to assign the name "knowledge" or "wisdom" to the "first friend".'

(both before and after) – those involving patients, doctors, disease, health and so forth – consists in (1') knowledge, (2') an ignorance that is not so total as to be completely unaware of its ignorance, and (3') an ignorance that is completely unaware of its ignorance. The passage as a whole (218A2–B3) goes as follows:

It's just for these reasons that we'd say that those who are already wise too, no longer love wisdom (*philosophein*), whether these are gods or human beings; nor, again, would we say that those people love wisdom who have ignorance in such a way as to be bad, for (we'd say) no person who is bad by being ignorant loves wisdom. There remain, then, those who have this bad thing, ignorance, but are not yet [totally] lacking in sense through its agency, nor [yet totally] ignorant, but still think themselves not to know what they don't know. Which means, then (*dio dē*), that those who do love wisdom are those who are as yet neither good nor bad, while as many as are bad don't love wisdom, and neither do the good.

Those, then, who are (totally) ignorant do not desire wisdom, because they have been deprived of desire for the good.⁷⁰ It follows, if all humans desire the good, that the class of bad people (or, at any rate people bad in themselves) is empty; as the class of good people (or at any rate people good in themselves) is also empty, since no human is self-sufficient.

But now there are one or two more aspects of the passage just cited that need our attention. Strictly speaking, being wise, being ignorant and being neither-wise-nor-ignorant are still just *examples* of good, bad and neither-good-nor-bad. So when Socrates says, for example, 'nor, again, would we say that those people love wisdom who have ignorance in such a way as to *be* bad [i.e. totally ignorant]', he is doing nothing – strictly speaking – that he could not have done in relation to any other example: e.g. in relation to the case of the sick and health, 'nor . . . would we say that those people love health who are sick in such a way as to *be* bad [i.e. so sick that there is no point even in their thinking about getting well again]'. However there are, at the same time, two things that make the example of knowledge and the two kinds of ignorance different. The first is that – as we have pointed out more than once – Socrates nowhere gives any indication in the case of knowledge or wisdom, as he does indicate in the case of health, that this is, in the end, some kind of mere 'image-friend'. That argument, of

⁷⁰ The totally ignorant, we take it, will be those who are so ignorant that even Socratic questioning cannot arouse them to raise any questions about what they are doing. For only so can we understand how it could be maintained that members of this class have lost all desire for the good. (One whose apparent desires to do particular things can be altered by Socratic questioning has evidently not lost the desire for good. For it is by altering people's beliefs as to what is good – and *only* by that means – that Socrates influences people's actions.)

course, has the typical weakness of all arguments from silence. But here is another argument. The *second* feature that distinguishes the new example, knowledge, is that *knowledge is what* (as Socrates points out at 218A3) *the gods have, as a permanent possession*. Given that there is nothing better in the universe than the gods, what more could one wish for than what would make one – at least in one respect – divine? For Socrates, if not for us, that would be an entirely rhetorical question, as the *Apology* makes amply clear; and, as we argued in Chapter 5, §A above, the evocations, here in the present *Lysis* passage, of the *Apology* and its central claims about knowledge and ignorance, are unmistakeable.

To sum up, what we are claiming about the apparently superfluous passage on *presence* is that

KN10. Socrates' aim in introducing knowledge as the good is meant to drop (further) hints, especially to Lysis, of the idea that knowledge may well be the first friend that we are seeking.

II IF THE ‘FIRST FRIEND’ IS KNOWLEDGE OR WISDOM, DOES THAT RULE OUT ITS BEING HAPPINESS?

The apparent problem we (Penner and Rowe) still face with respect to the ‘first friend’ is this: that even though

- (a) the candidate which we (Penner and Rowe) have said we think the *Lysis* seems to single out as the first friend is knowledge [of the good], nevertheless
 - (b) happiness, too, seems likely to be unconditionally useful or unconditionally beneficial from a Socratic point of view;
- but
- (c) happiness and knowledge do not seem to be the same thing – as we see immediately from the reflection that
 - (d) knowledge is a means – the means to happiness, indeed – and happiness is the end.

Surely

- (e) the means cannot be the end?

And, in any case, looking back at the formulation of Socratic intellectualism in Chapter 10, §4 above, we have that

- (f) the fundamental desire that generates all voluntary action is (DES.), the desire for whatever action may be the best means currently available to me, in the circumstances I am in, to the end of maximizing the amount of *happiness* (or *ultimate good*) I will achieve over a complete life [italics added].

So how could wisdom be the end? Fortunately for us, this problem is not without precedent. For it is exactly the problem we face in the *Euthydemus*. There too, it is quite clear, on the one hand, that Socrates is saying that everyone desires happiness, and things are good to the extent that they promote happiness (278e3–279a3, cited in §8 above); and on the other hand that he is saying not only that wisdom is good luck, but also that wisdom is the only thing that is good in itself (279c5–280a8). So we think the motivation for looking for a viable way to represent happiness (or maximum happiness available in one's particular circumstances) as in some way the same thing as wisdom or knowledge is strong. Let us address ourselves to this problem before what will be our final topic in this chapter, the 'first friend' and the Form of the Good.

We begin with the way in which knowledge (or wisdom) competes with such other goods – or supposed goods – as health, wealth, good looks, the ability to do whatever one pleases, high office and the like. In §8 above, in equation (e5), we put this competition in the following way: that
 e7. wisdom is the only thing good in itself as a means to happiness,
 this being our way of suggesting that Socrates' point in the *Euthydemus* is that

e8. wisdom is the only thing that is *always* a means to happiness.
 Health *sometimes* results in happiness, *sometimes* results in unhappiness, which the *Euthydemus* plainly enough takes to be the content of the claim that health is not good in itself, and even that it is not a good (281d2–e1, with e3–4).

But the problem remains in the following form: that in this reading of 'good in itself', we still have *two* things being said to be good in themselves – the means (or rather, as we now see, the indispensable means, or, better, what is universally the means) – and the end.⁷¹ We might try a sidestep, and say that what Plato had in mind in the *Euthydemus* was solely that there was only one thing good in itself *as a means*. However for the reader of the *Lysis* the problem is more serious. For this dialogue appears clearly enough to take it that there is only one 'first friend' (so we argued in Part I, Chapter 5). So the sidestep does not help.

Here is a suggested way forward. We admit that the universal *happiness* is different from the universal *knowledge* or *wisdom*. But knowledge or wisdom are not, in particular cases, means to complete happiness; at best they are means to the maximum happiness available to one, given one's

⁷¹ The problem is not unexpected. For there could be more than one thing that is *always* present when happiness is present, or at any rate when the maximum of happiness available is present. At the very least, one will be the universal means, wisdom, and the other will be the end, happiness itself.

circumstances, or – otherwise put: see n. 59 above – the luck of the draw. What that maximum is, is always particular to particular circumstances. And the same is true of the particular action one chooses as the means to that particular maximum of happiness. But this consideration leads one to the following reflection:

FF1. one can hardly think of the particular action which is the best means in a particular case except as the best means to the best end available in the particular case; but, by the same token, one can also hardly think of the best end available in a particular case except as that gained by the particular action which is the best means in that particular case.

Now, since the best means available and the best end available always go together, we might think of them as each parts of the same package (the best means available to the best end available). But then it appears to be possible to say that

FF2. the 'first friend' in any particular case is the best package presently available.

Here we may usefully recall a point made in §5 above, that the 'first friend' is not identifiable – and indeed cannot *exist* – except as the ultimate term of a means–end hierarchy. So it is not exactly straightforward for reference to the 'first friend' suddenly to be thought clear of all reference to other supposed friends. In any case, with (FF2) in hand, it then becomes possible to say, as a kind of shorthand, *either* that

FF2a. the 'first friend' is presently available maximal happiness [viz., the happiness you get via wisdom],

or that

FF2b. the 'first friend' is wisdom [viz., the wisdom that leads to presently available maximal happiness].

Put in another way, and generalizing over particular occasions:

FF2c. the course of action '*seek knowledge*' on any particular occasion – given the hopelessness in a complex world of trusting to flipping a coin, or to dumb luck – is not distinguishable from the course of action '*seek happiness*' on that particular occasion. For knowledge always leads to maximum available happiness.

Here the difficulty is obviated by speaking, not in terms of means to ends, but in terms of courses of action including their consequences. Talk of means to ends regularly invites the suggestion of means that sometimes lead to the end, sometimes do not. Since that suggestion is inapposite in the case of wisdom as means to maximum available happiness, we have good reason to avoid such talk in the present context.

That, at any rate, is our proposal as to how best to meet the difficulty that we seem to have two rival candidates for the ‘first friend’.

12 IF THE ‘FIRST FRIEND’ IS KNOWLEDGE OR WISDOM, DOES THAT RULE OUT ANY CONNECTION WITH WHAT THE SOCRATES OF THE REPUBLIC WOULD CALL ‘THE FORM OF THE GOOD’?

What of the suggestion that the ‘first friend’ is the Form of the Good? We are inclined, in this case too, to look for an inclusive answer (as we did, in preliminary fashion, in Part I, Chapter 5, §C + D above). This will not be because we identify the best particular action with the Form of the Good or even with whatever the counterpart may be of the Form of the Good in such Socratic dialogues as the *Lysis* and the *Euthydemus*. The Form of the Good is, after all, a universal, while particular actions are not. This said, however, nothing stops us from saying that

FG1. the Form of the Good (or its Socratic counterpart) is identical with the universal *good* which applies maximally to each particular action that is the best available.

It may be objected that a Form should not be confused with a universal. We do not take this view. If we have allowed talk of the Form of the Good (or its Socratic counterpart), that has been solely a temporary concession to ways of speaking familiar to the community of students of Plato. Penner himself has argued elsewhere that – contrary to any claims on Aristotle’s part, based upon his very dubious notion of separation – something very like ‘the Platonic theory of Forms’, as we moderns typically understand this, follows directly from the Socratic theory of the objectivity of the sciences.⁷²

So, then,

FG2. to desire the Form of the Good = to desire [that the rest of one’s life partake, to the greatest extent possible in one’s circumstances, in] the *Form of the Good* = to desire *one’s own happiness* to the greatest extent possible = to desire [that one get] one’s own happiness to the greatest extent possible = to desire [that *knowledge* which is the best means available to gaining] one’s own happiness to the greatest extent possible.

* * *

This completes our treatment of the ‘first friend’ as knowledge – an identification which does not block us, in view of the identities just stated in

⁷² See Penner Unpub E.

(FG2),⁷³ from claiming that it could also be said that to the question ‘What is the first friend?’, ‘happiness’ and ‘the Form of the Good’ will themselves, in an appropriate context, also be perfectly acceptable answers. Just so, in the context of the *Euthydemus*, it would be appropriate to say either – as Socrates himself says – that wisdom is the only thing good in itself, or to say that happiness is the only thing good in itself.

⁷³ The identities are indicated by the italicized expressions.

CHAPTER 12

On seeking the good of others independently of one's own good; and other unfinished business

We now turn to some difficulties for, and objections to, the accounts of *philia*, *erōs* and desire for good which we have attributed to Socrates in the *Lysis*. The chief difficulty, and the only one which we will get to discuss in any detail at all, is the Vlastosian, Kantian idea of love which claims that if one does not seek the good of the beloved *independently of* one's own good, what one has *called* love isn't really love at all, but at best a refined form of selfishness (see especially Chapter 10, §3 above). We then note very briefly some remaining questions which we cannot here treat fully, but with at any rate some indication of how we might try to answer these questions.

I THE VLASTOSIAN, KANTIAN REQUIREMENT THAT LOVE BE FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS INDEPENDENTLY OF ONE'S OWN GOOD

We begin with a doubt that may strike readers when they try to take in our suggestion that love is possible for a psychological egoist. For psychological egoists do seem to have to restrict themselves to a rather bloodless theory of the desires that bring us to action – of those desires that constitute the desire-half of belief-desire explanations of actions. True, we have suggested that we are not repudiating the existence of such other desires as thirst or hunger or sexual desire in the explanation of action. All we are doing is having those desires function in such explanations by their being represented within the *belief-half* of the belief-desire explanation (see Chapter 10, §4 above). And this may satisfy some concerning the mode of operation of such irrational desires. What may still seem unsatisfactory is that no deep human yearning should ever play the part of the desire-half of an action-explanation – only the seemingly vague and indeterminate desire for the maximum of one's own happiness. Is there no independent discriminating pursuit of

friendship that is by itself sufficient to bring us to action?¹ No independent discriminating pursuit of whatever will maximize the good of others? No independent discriminating pursuit in a mother of the protection of her young?

It is in fact the idea of *independence* here that tends to suck one into such ideas as pure friendship, pure altruism, and pure mother-love – as if there were no question of our own happiness being ‘wrapped up in’ the happiness of the friend, the other or the child.² Only on the narrowest construal of ‘the mother’s own happiness’ is it the case that the mother’s own happiness is *not* enhanced by the good that accrues to the child from the mother’s apparent sacrifice of her own happiness. So, we suggest, the matter is not so simple. Who will say for sure that a father is not happier (overall) in losing a kidney for a transplant needed by his son – or that a daughter is not happier (overall) in losing a kidney for her father?

‘Yes, but it is the parent’s love for the child that motivates the parent to do it, not the parent’s desire to be happy.’ But the issue that is being raised here is not over

(a) the parent’s love of the child.

It is over

(a*) the parent’s love for the child *independently of* – with total disregard to – that parent’s own happiness.

Hence the issue is not the parent’s love for the child as against the parent’s desire to be happy, but (a*) the parent’s love for the child *by itself*

¹ ‘Discriminating’, so as to keep it the case that the pursuit is a rational pursuit – where, *modulo* some qualifications related to the contrast between real and apparent good – our actions are redirected according as our beliefs alter as to what the best object available is for our desire. See also Chapter 10, esp. nn. 47, 49 above.

² As when in a Christian homily, the couple to be married may each be enjoined to put the happiness of the other ahead of their own. For Socrates (at any rate as we depict him here) this is a silly injunction – as we may see from wondering what parent could possibly want their child to subject his or her own happiness to the happiness of their new spouse. For Socrates, the question is whether each genuinely *loves* the other, and whether it isn’t therefore the case that the child’s happiness is ‘wrapped up in’ the happiness of the spouse – so that what is required is simple *wisdom* in the child as to this particular implication of their love (that it is in the child’s *interest* to seek the happiness of the spouse). If this is so, parents have every reason to desire that the child look to the happiness of the spouse – and that without the child’s subjecting his or her happiness to the spouse’s. It is wisdom on the question of the child’s interests – so Socrates would have it – and not Christian injunctions to disregard one’s own interests (impossible to fulfil without love, unnecessary for a wise loving), that is what is called for. For talk of our own happiness being ‘wrapped up in’ the happiness of another, common to John Stuart Mill and to George Eliot see the passages quoted above in Chapter 2, n. 59. Neither Mill nor George Eliot notices any inconsistency with the rest of their views about the falsity of psychological egoism as an account of human motivation, or about the viciousness of seeking one’s own good, even with the knowledge of what one’s own good consists in.

(independently of the parent's own happiness) as against a particular desire of the parent's which is both

(b1) a desire that maximizes the parent's own happiness and – as a result, in these circumstances, given that the parent's beliefs about his or her own happiness include a high-level premiss to the effect that that happiness is wrapped up in the child's well-being, as well as other beliefs about the child's health –

(b2) a desire that the child receives the parent's kidney.

'Still, it is the love for the child that leads the parent to do it.' *Simply* the parent's love for the child? That alone? (A*) rather than (A)? What, the parent doesn't so much as *weigh* into the decision the suffering and risk to the parent, the parent's ability to function after surgery, the happiness it will bring the parent to see the child functioning and flourishing again, the pain and sorrow the parent would suffer later should the child die because of the parent's unwillingness to face the risks involved? But if the parent *does* weigh such matters in – at whatever weight – then it is surely entirely natural to suppose that the decision takes the form 'Everything taken together, it's best I do this.'³

This at least establishes that the desire is not simply for the child's good (which was half the contention we were addressing ourselves to), but for a certain optimum, a maximum of some good. The question that remains (the other half of our contention) is whether the optimum or maximum involved is the parent's own maximum happiness (with all that this happiness involves – including, say, the child's functioning and flourishing, since that makes the parent happy) or some other maximum. So long as we do not construe the parent's own happiness so minimally as to exclude from it such happiness as is brought to him or her by seeing his child's functioning and flourishing, we think the case remains strong that it is the parent's own maximum happiness that decides what action is done.

³ This perhaps conveys how implausible we find such remarks as the following (Foot 1972: 154–5, with postscript (1978: 156)):

We readily accept private affection as giving reasons for actions without the least hint of self-interest. Why should an extended fellow-feeling [benevolence] not do the same?

Without the *least* hint? Let the heavens fall in on oneself? We do not see how Foot is so certain of this. (This said, Penner acknowledges a deep debt, incurred in the early 1960s, to Foot 1958, 1958–9, where, thanks to the influence of the Warnocks, he became convinced that ethics cannot be about principles – as in the powerful work of R. M. Hare that then prevailed – but must be about human good. Penner there fruitfully misunderstood Foot to be speaking of the agent's *own* good, where Foot, whatever her initial impulses, ended up – as the passage just quoted makes clear – going along with the British moralists.)

'But the parent doesn't so much as *think* of these considerations when he or she does the action. The parent is thinking only of the child's welfare. Just *ask* the parent what he or she was thinking at the time he or she made the decision!' Here we see two potent sources of the idea that love involves seeking the good of others *independently of* one's own good. The first is introspection, construed as incorrigible. If the parent *says* that what he or she was thinking of at the time of decision was solely the child's good, then the parent is *right* that it was solely the child's good that he or she was thinking of. If that is what the parent *says* he or she is thinking, then that *is* what he or she is thinking. (Conversely, without this assumption of incorrigibility, we do not have any assurance that what the parent thinks is what he or she *says* he or she is thinking.)⁴

This belief in incorrigibility receives strong support from a second source of support for the idea of independence. This is the *meanings of words*, or, what is the same thing in this context, the *proposition* (at any rate as classically construed – that is, construed in terms of a whole that is a function of the meanings of the parts of the sentence). Take the sentence 'My child's good requires that I donate a kidney' that shows up in the parent's account of what he or she is thinking. If the parent says, 'My thought is that my child's good requires that I donate a kidney: it is *not* that my own happiness, all things considered, requires that I donate a kidney,' and the parent *knows* these two facts about what he or she is thinking, then it is natural to follow the classical theory of propositions (in Frege, *Gedanke*, 'thoughts') and identify the thought in terms of the meaning of the proposition generated by the meanings of the constituent expressions.⁵

⁴ There is a slightly weaker position to be found in Davidson, Rorty and others – following the later Wittgenstein – according to which although first-person reports on what one believes are not incorrigible, they have a kind of first-person authority nevertheless. Such reports must be *usually* right, on this view, since that is a presupposition of our ability to learn language and communicate with each other. (A kind of 'usualist' behavioural incorrigibility – as Rorty might put it – underlies our convention to accept as a general rule such avowals whenever a speaker makes them.)

We doubt this consequence of the linguistic turn (and we are in any case not partisans of the linguistic turn); but even if this consequence were correct, we don't see that in its 'usualist' form it would lend much support to this particular appeal to self-knowledge. As for what we know, we ourselves prefer what we take to be the Socratic point that you don't know anything you *think* you know, or even what you believe about it, unless you can survive subjection to an extensive dialectical examination that may bring in just about anything (cf. Chapter 10, §2 above).

⁵ In Frege's theory – to summarize, then build on the explanation already given at Chapter 10, n. 24 above – the reference of a name (if the name *has* a reference: some names, such as 'Odysseus', have no reference) is the thing it names, while the meaning of a name is the method we follow in proceeding from the name to the reference (if any) – a set of instructions for taking us from the name to the reference. Hence, 'meaning determines reference'. Thus the *meaning* of 'the Morning Star' is different from the meaning of 'the Evening Star', despite the fact that the *reference* of the two expressions is the same. Similarly, the reference of a predicate is the attribute (if any) which the

The appeal to Fregean meanings (*Sinne*) and propositions here enables the parent to block the identification of the thought expressed by one of the following

- 1a I must help this child by donating a kidney,
- 1b I must help give this child what he needs,
- 1c I must come to the help of my child in his trouble,
- 1d I must help my child,

with either of the following thoughts:

- 2a I must help this child who matters so much to me,
or indeed

- 2b I must help this child with whose happiness my own happiness is so wrapped up.

How do we know that the thought (or thoughts) expressed by (1a), (1b) or (1c) are not *identical with* the thoughts expressed by (2a) and (2b)? (If they are identical, then of course the love for the child expressed in the first three sentences is *not* independent of the parent's own self-interest, as expressed by the latter two sentences.)⁶

Here resides the great value of meanings and classical propositions for the sorts of Vlastosian, Kantian ethical theorists against whom we – Penner

predicate names or otherwise designates, while the meaning of the predicate is a set of instructions for taking us from the predicate to the attribute (if any: Frege himself assumes, fatally, that there is an attribute corresponding to every predicate). The meaning of 'is red' differs from the meaning of 'is Lenin's favourite colour', in spite of the fact that the reference is the same.

Let us think now of the truth referred to by 'The Morning Star is red' – for convenience, let us assume it is true – which is presumably to be got from the reference of each of 'the Morning Star' and 'is red'. Similarly, the meaning of 'the Evening Star is red' is to be got from the meaning of each of 'the Evening Star' and 'is red'. But since the reference of 'the Morning Star' is the same as the reference of 'the Evening Star' and we normally suppose that the thought someone has who utters 'the Morning Star is red' is different from the thought someone has who utters 'the Evening Star is red', it is natural to suppose that the *thought* each is having is what is given by the *meaning* of the sentence he is uttering, not the reference.

This is the line of thought that will get us shortly, in the main text, the position that the father's thought

that the child's good requires that the parent donate a kidney
is a *different* thought from the thought

that the parent's own good (wrapped up in the child's good) requires that the parent donate a kidney.

(So that if the parent *knows* what he or she is thinking, he or she knows that it is only the first thought and not the second that he or she is thinking.)

The above remarks are based upon the classical theory of meanings and propositions. Modern approaches differ in certain respects – for example in how they identify the objects of belief (for example, by bringing the *reference* of certain names into this conception of proposition), but not in how they identify the *psychological states* directed on those objects, such as states of believing. Those acts of believing tend still to be individuated by classical meanings, even though the word 'proposition' is assigned to something else. See Fodor 1989.

⁶ On the identity of claims (when does what one interlocutor, or one sentence, or one use of a sentence say the same thing as another?), see Chapter 10, §1 above, as well as the [next note](#).

and Rowe – are setting our face. This great value resides in the fact that, according to the classical (Fregean) theory of meanings, meanings, like classical propositions, are *independent* of reference. So

- a. we can identify what the parent has in mind with the meanings of the words the parent uses to express that thought, without any grasp on the truth about the reference of those words;

and

- b. we can then argue that the parent cannot fail to know what thought is being expressed thereby, since the parent cannot fail to know the meanings with which he or she uses the words in question (again without any grasp on the truth about the references of those words).

This independence of meaning from reference comes about as a result of the following line of thought. As already noted above (n. 5), if the reference of a name or predicate is the thing or attribute the name or predicate stands for, the meaning of the name or predicate is a set of instructions (instructions we read off from the name or predicate by knowing the *meaning* of name or predicate) for getting from the name or predicate to the reference of name or predicate. The set of instructions for the name ‘the Morning Star’ (*Look for the last heavenly body visible beside the Moon in the morning*) are declared to be the same whatever else may be true of the reference (whether the Morning Star is the Evening Star or not, whether it is a planet or a star, and so forth – and *even if there is no unique last heavenly body visible beside the Moon in the morning*). So what ‘the Morning Star’ *means* is independent of what it refers to.

Now, what we have just said for names and predicates applies also to sentences.⁷ Their meaning is made up of the meanings of their parts. So what a sentence *means* is independent of what is true in the world about the things and attributes named in the sentence.⁸ It follows immediately that what the sentences

⁷ It is true that the idea of a sentence having a reference (which turns out, in accordance with Frege’s theory of functions, to be the ‘truth value’), is often doubted, not to say ridiculed. We think this attitude is without reason. People can shrink from speaking of such a thing as the reference of a sentence if they choose. But it is hard to see how believers in the notion of truth-conditions can fail to note that such truth-conditions, if applied to the world, must result in one of two states of affairs – that in which the truth-conditions are *fulfilled* by the world, and those in which the truth-conditions are *not so* fulfilled. But what can these two states of affairs be but *the true* and *the false*? The very idea of a *proposition*, since it presupposes that it can be known to be the same proposition independently of knowing whether it is true or false, appears to be committed to the existence of these two (possible) states of affairs, the true and the false.

⁸ As for the idea of the reference of a sentence being a function of the reference of the parts, Frege argues that, while the sentence ‘Odysseus was set ashore at Ithaca when fast asleep’ lacks a reference if one of its key parts, the name ‘Odysseus’ lacks a reference, still ‘the thought remains the same whether “Odysseus” has a reference or not’ (Frege 1892: 63). (He can say this, because the sense of

- 2a I must help this child who matters so much to me,
or
2b I must help this child with whose happiness my own happiness is so wrapped up,
mean is different from what
1d I must help my child
means.

Should we be impressed by these suggestions? One reason for not being *too* impressed is that, somewhat implausibly, all of (1a), (1b), (1c) and (1d) differ in meaning from each other and so represent different thoughts. Similarly, ‘12’ and ‘the number that comes after 11’ also represent different thoughts about a certain mathematical entity. Should we really be impressed with the suggestion that someone could be thinking about the number 12 if they were prepared to affirm that ‘12 is not the successor of 11’?

‘But what *is* it that people have in mind if that is not given by the meaning?’ Our view is that whatever, so to speak, inner sentences we utter to ourselves, they will always be uttered against a considerable background of things taken for granted.⁹ The only differences between our first four sentences, namely, to repeat,

- 1a I must help this child by donating a kidney,
1b I must help give this child what he needs,
1c I must come to the help of my child in his trouble,
1d I must help my child,

the whole – the thought – is a function of the sense of the parts – and ‘Odysseus’ has a sense, and indeed the same sense, whether it has a reference or not.) It is true that some have maintained that later in his life, Frege, e.g., in ‘The Thought’ (1918a) went over to a theory of *de re* senses – that’s to say, senses that only exist if there is a reference. This seems to Penner implausible, especially in the light of the fact that Frege shows no signs of having changed his view on the independence of sense from reference in the contemporaneous ‘On Negation’ (1918b: 117–18). It is true that in the latter work, Frege excludes from his treatment of thoughts any such as belong to fiction. But the point of this exclusion may not be to say (implausibly) that sentences lack a sense if one of the names in the sentence lacks reference (as if lacking reference were the same thing as being fictional), but to distinguish between ‘Santa Claus brings presents to all children at Christmas’ as true in fiction and the same sentence as really false, since *no one* brings presents to all children at Christmas. Frege is here concerned only with being really false, so naturally he excludes fiction. Penner sees no signs of Frege having doubted that ‘Santa Claus brings presents to all children at Christmas’ has a sense, or that it expresses a thought.

⁹ We have spoken above of the firmly negative attitude Penner takes towards the idea currently being discussed, of the independence of what an interlocutor or sentence or particular use of a sentence *says* from whether the sentence is true or false. This idea, while it is absolutely central to virtually all work in logic, seems to us very questionable. (As questionable as the idea that reference is well treated by assuming that sense is independent of reference.)

is in the amount of background to the situation that is made explicit. In the circumstances in which they are actually used, they surely express the same thought.¹⁰

But now the question arises why our other two sentences might not be extended the same privilege:

- 2a I must help this child who matters so much to me,
- 2b I must help this child with whose happiness my own happiness is so wrapped up.

If the latter two sentences do indeed represent background to the situation, then they too will, in the circumstances, express the same thought. This possibility, we think, shows the bankruptcy of the notion of independence. The issue needs to be decided not on the basis of what sentence we express our thought with, or on the basis of a classical theory of meaning, but on the question what the actual background is of the kinds of situations we are considering. If we are right about this, then the concept of independence needs to be dropped here. (We do not, in any case believe either in incorrigibility or in meanings.)¹¹ But for present purposes, all that matters is that even if the classical doctrine of meaning were to be well adapted to giving

¹⁰ Cf. the important distinction we make between *what sentences say* – even as used on a particular occasion – and *what speakers are saying* on a particular occasion: Chapter 10, §2 above.

¹¹ Or even in Davidsonian usualist behavioural near-incorrigibility (cf. n. 4 above). The idea that we know *incorrigibly* what we are thinking is all but explicit in Frege's defence of the view that the thought expressed by the sentence 'the Morning Star is a body illuminated by the Sun' differs from that expressed by the sentence 'the Evening Star is a body illuminated by the Sun'. For Frege remarks (1892, 62), that 'Anybody who did not know that the Evening Star is the Morning Star might hold the one thought to be true and the other to be false.' This argument can only be made by someone who thinks that when someone holds the one thought true and the other thought false, that person knows beyond peradventure of a mistake *what thoughts he or she is thinking*. (If Joan does not have incorrigible knowledge of what she is thinking, it might be the case that she, unbeknownst to herself, holds the *same* thought to be both true and false.)

We note in passing a very odd consequence of this theory. Suppose that we know, as the Count does not that the person he is meeting in the garden is the Countess and not Susanna. Then just because the Count's believing that he is seducing the person he is meeting in the garden is different from his believing that he is seducing his own wife, it would also be the case for *us* (and for the Countess and Susanna) that our believing, *the Count is seducing the person he is meeting in the garden* is different from our believing *the Count is seducing his own wife*. Thus the Count's ignorance by itself makes it the case that these are different beliefings, each being directed to a different proposition – even for us! (These remarks apply equally to our beliefings and to the propositions we believe: compare n. 5 above. The point appears to be due to Paul Benacerraf: see Evans 1982, 19n.) Can this be anything but most implausible – and a serious drawback to the Fregean theory? But that is a matter to be taken up elsewhere: see Penner Unpub b. (Why shouldn't we, or Susanna, say, if someone suggests we have changed thoughts by switching from the one sentence to the other, 'The person he is meeting in the garden, i.e. the Countess – what difference does it make what expressions we use? Our thought is of exactly the same person'? For a different example, see Chapter 10 above, text to n. 21.)

accounts of the meaning of sentence-types, so that if there were any meanings, then (1a)–(1d), (2a) and (2b) would have to be said to have different meanings, it does not seem well adapted to sentences avowing thoughts *on a particular occasion*, let alone to what *speakers say* on a particular occasion.¹²

There are of course other options for the believer in a love independent of ‘the least hint of self-interest’. This would be for the mother (who starts off denying that she acted in part for her own happiness, saying only that she acted for her children’s welfare) to assert the counterfactual concessive conditional ‘Even if it were *not* the best thing for me to see to the child’s well-being, I would still want the child’s well-being over everything else.’ This would do the trick if we could believe that a counterfactual *this fundamental* in the mother’s belief system (where the good of her children is arguably as high-level a premiss as exists in her beliefs as to her own happiness). Assessing such counterfactuals is as difficult for us as assessing counterfactuals of the sort ‘If the earth exercised no gravitational pull . . .’ Counterfactuals always ask us to consider what would be the case if we change some things and keep others the same (cf. our comments on *Lysis* 220E–221C in Chapter 10, §D above). The problem, in cases like the present one, is that we can’t see how to change the mother’s happiness being wrapped up in that of her children while leaving ‘everything else’ unchanged. What kind of loving mother would it be whose happiness is not wrapped up in the happiness of her children? So we also find this option implausible. Here the idea of a purely Kantian mother will leave many of us cold.¹³

A third option would be to invoke the principle of double effect. Here the defender of independence may concede that the identification of the child as ‘this child who matters so much to me’ may occur in the parent’s beliefs, but deny that it plays any part in the parent’s *intention*, which will be ‘independent’ of the fact about the reference of ‘this child’ that the child’s happiness matters to the parent. (Sidgwick would say that the parent’s happiness is part of the motive, but not part of the intention with which the action was done.) Now, we do not deny that there may be cases where there is a way to preserve *some* of the assumptions made in the principle of double effect. Take the doctor who gives morphine with the intention (as proponents of the principle say) to relieve suffering, though foreknowing

¹² Cf. also n. 10 above, with reference. Of course we do not deny that in *other* – imaginable – situations (situations imagined, e.g. by people, such as Foot – or indeed just about any contemporary moral theorist – who believes in pure altruism without the *least* hint of self-interest), we could have one of the first quartet of sentences true and both of the latter two false. This is a matter of the sentence-types involved. But the issue is not one of what *sentence-types* say, but at the very least of what *sentences as used on this occasion* say, and indeed of what a *speaker* is saying on this occasion.

¹³ See Chapter 10, §3 on Kant’s ‘not the meanest . . .’

that doing so will shorten the patient's life. Our legal and moral system does not want to accuse the doctor of the crime of shortening someone's life. So it denies that the doctor's intention was to shorten the patient's life; it was merely to relieve the patient's pain. (Shortening the patient's life was, in Sidgwick's terminology, only part of the *motive*. So there is no moral culpability.)

Now, on the one hand, this seems to us the merest dodge. Why shouldn't we ask our moral and legal systems to bite the bullet and admit that the doctor *does* intentionally shorten the patient's life – because what the doctor is doing is lessening the patient's pain by the only means at his or her disposal, namely, giving the morphine in doses he or she foreknows will shorten the patient's life? If that makes the doctor's action fall under 'a wrong' in criminal law or in our moral code, so much the worse for criminal law and our moral code.¹⁴ On the other hand, this much can be said for the unfortunate doctor: that within his or her deliberative structure, relieving the pain of the patient is a *much* higher-level premiss than the premiss involved in shortening the life of the patient, which is only present by virtue of a technological belief (unfortunately true at the moment) that the only way to relieve certain extreme pains is by means of doses of such drugs as morphine which will shorten the lives of patients. It is not, so to speak, that the action is *equally* an action of shortening the patient's life and relieving the patient's suffering.

Could not the same be done for the mother? Can we not say that the mother's concern for the welfare of her children is a higher-level premiss than that involving her own happiness? Here we are inclined to be sceptical for the kinds of reasons we have given above in discussing the case of the father and giving a kidney to his son, especially in the light of the – we think hardly deniable – contention that the happiness of a parent is wrapped up in the happiness of their children. How exactly, in the circumstances of people's actual lives, are the parents to separate from the children the fact that the parents' happiness is thoroughly wrapped up in the children's?

'But the parent's own happiness is still the highest-level premiss. So you are still making the father or mother selfish brutes, instead of the loving, caring beings they actually are. For you are making the *ultimate* decider be the parent's own happiness, not the child's.' No, we are not making the parent *selfish*, merely *self-interested*, and self-interested in a particular way – a way in which the self-interest is *not* mere selfishness. We do not deny that

¹⁴ On the limited perspective of law (and on Augustine), see Chapter 10, n. 46.

there are people whose conception of their self-interest makes them also selfish. These will include the likes of Thrasymachus in Plato's *Republic*, who, unlike Augustine, think good and happiness are zero-sum quantities, so that getting one's own maximum good requires taking such good away from anyone else.¹⁵

What is selfishness, then? It is *not caring for the good of anyone else, and being prepared to harm others if one supposes one will be made happy by so doing*. This cannot be identified with self-interest by anyone who supposes that our happiness is wrapped up in the happiness of others, or by anyone who (like Socrates) believes that harming others will always result in harm to you – let alone by parents who know that nothing makes them so happy as things going well for their children, and nothing casts them down so much as things going badly for their children. In the case of the father and mother in the kinds of situations we have been envisaging, we are emphatically *not* considering selfish people. That is common ground for all sides on this issue. Can this be accounted for on our view? We think so. In our view, these are parents who aim at whatever will maximize their happiness, where their intention is that the 'whatever will maximize' is to be spelled out in terms of the beliefs in their belief-systems. And what we find in their belief-systems are beliefs implying that any falling short of advancing their children's good will itself be a detriment to their own happiness. (These beliefs are representations of the good that will be achieved by the parent from that seeing to the good of their children – beliefs that involve not just certain feelings, but also beliefs about the children's good and how it might be attained. We maintain with Socrates that it is not enough for love for one's children that one have certain feelings. It is also required that one exercise some considerable thought about the welfare of the children.) To say the parents love their children, we have maintained above, is to say that a high-level premiss in their system speaks of the parents' own happiness being wrapped up in all the details of the children's possibilities and their happiness. So the happiness these parents aim at is a happiness they achieve because their children's happiness is assured. So we say we are not making the parents selfish brutes.

¹⁵ 'Still,' it may be said, 'the fundamental premiss of each individual in all his or her action is that he or she seek what is best *for him or her*, not for the child or parent, or loved one.' We reply that the issue is *not* what the fundamental premiss is, and what is merely a high-level means to one's own happiness. The issue is rather whether some high-level means are at so high a level as *never* to be irrelevant to one's own self-interest. Avoiding harm to another (e.g. *Crito* 49b–c) is an obvious Socratic example; another would be holding back from prosecuting your father for murder, especially if it is a somewhat dubious case anyway. See the discussion of the *Euthyphro* in Penner Unpub c. Why should not caring for one's young be another case of this sort?

To sum up, if nothing makes parents so happy as things going well for their children, and nothing casts them down so much as things going badly for their children, how can it not be the case that the happiness of the parents is served by their seeking the happiness of their children?

2 UNFINISHED BUSINESS

We gesture here towards two problems to which we recognize that we should need to give more attention if we are to make the Socratic theory of *philia*, *erōs* and desire for the good appear as plausible as we think it is. We offer no complete solution to either problem, noting only that proper solutions to these problems will be required of us at some point.

First, we look very briefly at the famous argument of the British moralists concerning the possibility of pure benevolence or pure altruism: an argument which, if correct, would show that the centrepiece of the Socratic psychology of action, presupposed by the theory of love we have found in the *Lysis*, is easily refutable. Once stated, the argument in question has seemed to almost any serious philosopher who has thought seriously about psychological egoism to dispose conclusively of that theory. Proponents of this position include Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Butler, Hume, Sidgwick, and to name a few writers of the last century, Broad, Frankena and Feinberg – indeed, pretty well everyone who has written since the time of Hutcheson and Butler. These writers have taken it to prove conclusively the possibility of pure benevolence or pure altruism.

A single important exception is Kant, who at any rate passed over the argument in silence. Kant suggests that one can act for at least one motive other than the desire for (one's own) happiness – one can do something because it is right. But how can that be? Are not all our actions empirically determined by the desire for (one's own) happiness? To get out of this difficulty – which both Socrates and Spinoza would surely have put to him – Kant (notoriously) used an argument appealing to the distinction between phenomenon and noumenon.¹⁶ This argument is such a bad one – as we see it, probably the worst argument ever made by any great philosopher in our history – that we must wonder why he never commented on the British moralists' argument. (While Kant did not read Butler, so far as we

¹⁶ Empirically, says Kant, we are determined, for the structure of reason reads into the phenomena that every event has a cause. Noumenally (if we think about the things in themselves that are forever inaccessible via phenomena, and so cannot even be conceived – unless in some 'regulative' way, whatever that may be), things, and in particular the self, are not determined. So free will is possible after all.

know, he did read Hutcheson and Hume.) Is it possible that he found that argument no more persuasive than we do?

The argument that is supposed to refute psychological egoism so easily is this. If all desire were for happiness or pleasure, then we should need to notice – in such cases as gaining pleasure from satisfying one's thirst, or one's hunger, or a sexual drive – that it cannot be maintained that all desire is for pleasure. To see this, consider the phrase '*desire* the pleasure of satisfying one's *desire* for drink'. Notice two uses of the word 'desire', the second embedded in the direct object of the first. Call the desire for drink the primary desire, and the desire to satisfy the primary desire the secondary desire. We then have two objects of desire: the primary object of desire, which is *drink*, and the secondary object of desire, which is the pleasure of satisfying one's desire for drink. Now, drink is not the same thing as pleasure; hence in these circumstances, there can be no doubt whatever that we have been right to speak of two desires. The primary desire which is a desire for drink is quite distinct from the secondary desire which is a desire for the pleasure of satisfying one's desire for drink. And of these desires, the first is *not* for pleasure.¹⁷ So it cannot be that all desire is desire for pleasure. (Indeed if pleasure is always in the satisfying of desires, then it is *never* the case that one desires pleasure alone.)

This argument does not meet the challenge laid down by Socratic intellectualism to the irrationalism of Plato and Aristotle. Socrates can perfectly well admit that he has desires for drink, food and sex. The issue is whether such desires can function as the desire-half of a belief-desire explanation of an action. (Psychological egoism is a theory designed to explain *actions*.) Mere desire for drink, food or sex we have shown – in Chapter 10, §4 above – to be incapable of functioning in this way. What is needed is, as in our account of Socratic intellectualism, the good-directed, rationally redirectible desire for whatever is the best or happiest option open to the agent in the circumstances. (The desire for whatever is most pleasant is simply a variant on such a desire, if pleasure is construed broadly enough, as Socrates, Plato and Augustine often construed it, perhaps even so broadly as to be the same thing as happiness.)

It remains open, of course (or so it might be claimed), that besides the rationally redirectible desire for whatever may be the best means available to the agent to his or her maximum happiness in the circumstances, there are other rationally redirectible desires. This introduces the subject

¹⁷ Can one fail to be reminded here of the Platonic claim, at *Republic* iv, 438A ff., that the appetite of thirst is desire for *drink* and not for *good* drink, or even pleasant drink?

of incommensurable values, and ethical theories based upon the existence of such incommensurable values. Theories of this kind are something of a development from the natural home of theories of incommensurable values – within *political philosophy*, and *within political communities*. Thus one may very reasonably speak of values of different groups of people in the community, where the values of one group (say, maximum liberty) cannot be reconciled with the values of another group (say, maximum equality). Part of the reason for this plausibility of incommensurabilism in the area of political principle must be that to be political, values need to be *promulgated*, and so need to be formulable in relatively brief compass. (Cf. the ‘publicity condition’ for the moral principles involved in laying down the principles required for the ‘initial position’ in Rawls’ contractarian theory: Rawls 1971: 133, and esp. 142.) We ourselves agree with Socrates as we construe him, that a person’s view of the good cannot be set forth in relatively short compass, but needs virtually indefinitely extended dialogue. Thus we find more problematical the extension of incommensurabilism from the political sphere to the sphere of the individual agent, and to ‘values’ within a single individual.

This much, we think, can be said in favour of incommensurabilism as a moral theory: that if ‘values’ were restricted to relatively briefly stateable general principles – for example, moral principles as usually conceived, aesthetic principles, principles flowing from codes of honour, and so forth – and those principles could conflict (that is, command different actions in the same circumstances), and if, in addition, there were no principles telling the agent how to resolve conflicts, then incommensurabilism would be a true moral theory. The question is, however, whether incommensurabilism is persuasive once we get away from the idea of *such relatively briefly stateable moral principles* as what drive our actions (as we do with the Socratic theory of action).¹⁸

The idea of incommensurability, if employed against Socrates, would give us something like the following. (For simplicity’s sake, we take as exemplary the Kantian incommensurability of the moral and one’s own happiness.) While we can rank different courses of action (i) in calculations of maximal happiness, and (ii) in calculation of maximum conformity to moral principle, there is no over-riding criterion by the moral appeal to which the agent can settle which of the two conflicting possibilities he or she should realize. Underlying the idea of such an incommensurability of criteria for what is to be done must be a psychological thesis, which we

¹⁸ See for example Wiggins 1980.

shall call psychological incommensurabilism.¹⁹ Such a psychological thesis – that there are actions where there are two or more maximizing criteria, but no criterion for deciding which action is to be done – is a psychological thesis according to which some agents opt one way, others another way, and there is no higher psychological determinant that explains why the agent acts in accordance now with the one criterion, now in accordance with the other. Something like such a psychological incommensurabilism must be attributed to Kant. For Kant is well aware of the plausibility of psychologically egoist explanations of many, if not most, of our actions. And he stages a titanic battle to show the possibility of another sort of motivation, namely, moral motivation.²⁰ (And of course moral motivation in Kant is also of the kind we have identified above as rationally redirectible. A change of view as to what action is the most moral will result in a difference of action in the agent who is acting morally.) So psychological incommensurabilism is the natural psychology of action to attribute to Kant.

By contrast with Kant, in modern incommensurabilism it is supposed that there are vastly many more determinants of action rustling around in one's head. Besides the self-interested and the moral, there are the altruistic, the aesthetic, matters of honour, the selfish and so forth. We find this modern incommensurabilism to suggest that our minds are a rather more chaotic place than perhaps they actually are. On this view, indeed, we see some risk of the mind and our decisions being totally chaotic. So far as we know, this issue of the psychology of action which incommensurabilism must presuppose has hardly been discussed in the literature. But this is as far as we can go in following this particular thread – which winds its way back to the first of two that we announced we would follow, but confessed we could not tie up.

The second of these two threads relates to religious accounts of love. We take just one example, that found in Anders Nygren's well-known book *Eros and Agape*. Here Nygren argues (with some support in parts of St Paul, in one strand of St Augustine, and in Martin Luther and in Protestantism)

¹⁹ Every moral theory must presuppose a psychology of action. Thus it is generally admitted that if psychological egoism were true, then most moral theories could not be true. A consideration that will weigh with some is that most moral theories presuppose that in morally blaming (or simply holding morally responsible) an agent for an action he or she did, we are saying that the agent could have done otherwise. But if psychological egoism is true, then (we believe, as did Kant, at any rate on this hypothesis) no one could have done otherwise. So Kantian morality presupposes a psychology that rules out psychological egoism. So too, moral incommensurabilism presupposes a certain psychological incommensurabilism.

²⁰ Kant 1785, Ak. IV: 406–8 (experience suggests that self-love is the determining cause of the will), 411–12 (anthropology by itself will give the wrong answer just noted), 419–20 (no actual example can show the possibility of the categorical imperative): contra 441.

for a theory of love based upon what he sees as Pauline theories of God's motiveless (utterly non-self-interested) love for the sinner. The first premiss of Christianity, or at least of Christian love, in this picture, is that

- cl1. God loves us, especially the sinners amongst us – and entirely without there being anything in it for him. It is 'motiveless' love (Nygren), utterly without self-interest.

God being God, selfless love is easy for him. What we (Penner and Rowe) notice here is that no consideration of human psychology or of the connection of love with the relation between the good of the one who is loved and the good of the one who loves need cause any difficulty for such selfless love. The second premiss, in this picture, is that

- cl2. it is impossible for any natural person – anyone who has not surrendered himself or herself entirely to Christ and the Holy Spirit – to love in this motiveless, non-self-interested way.

And the third premiss is that, nevertheless,

- cl3. it is possible for someone to feel the kind of love for God and for others which God feels for us if, by grace, we come to have faith in Christ, in which case such non-self-interested human love becomes possible because it proceeds not indeed from me, but from 'Christ in me' or 'the Holy Spirit in me'.

Without an infusion of divine Grace – without Christ or the Holy Spirit working *in me* – there can be no non-self-interested love proceeding from me. (On this view, Christian 'purity of heart' would be quite as much a miracle, one would have thought, as the creation from nothing proceeding from a love of God the father who is already self-sufficient in his eternal love for Son and Holy Spirit, and quite as baffling as the atonement. Cf. also the miraculous, or at any rate 'godlike' character of the just man Adeimantus describes at *Republic* II, 366c7–d1.) Finally, on this account,

cl4. self-interested love – not just selfish love – becomes a form of sin. The kinship of this Pauline and Protestant idea of Christian love with Kant's Puritanical picture of the virtuous anti-pharisee will be apparent.

Must we not wonder here, *a priori*, why one would not suppose that a Christian will find his or her happiness in God, or in some sort of continuing relation with God, for example, involving keeping his commandments to love God and one's neighbour? And then does not such love precisely serve one's own self-interest? According to Nygren, Augustine cannot bring himself to abandon either the requirement of selflessness on love or the requirement that one's truest happiness is to be found in the relevant love of God and one's neighbour – a difficulty that Nygren correctly diagnoses

as a weakness in Augustine's position. But the solution Nygren proposes of Augustine's difficulty is just the opposite of what he should have recommended. Nygren just wants Augustine to abandon the idea of one's true self-interest altogether. We (Penner and Rowe) think this is exactly the wrong choice. We think Nygren and the Protestants right if they think (as Nygren says they do) that motiveless, non-self-interested love is beyond human natural powers; and we are inclined to reject the miracle of selfless love through the presence of Christ in me or the Holy Spirit in me. One might as well have the Holy Grail do this for us, as in the magic with which Wagner decks out Christianity in *Parsifal*. Augustine should rather have stuck with the idea, given that he was going to remain a Christian, that our happiness resides in our relation with God, and that to seek to do His will is to seek one's own real happiness.

* * *

We realize that there are various replies that can be made to the lines we have taken above; the reader will, we hope, excuse us from attempting – at this stage, in what is already a much longer book than we had anticipated – to take account of the whole range of such possible replies. Our remarks must stand for the moment as all we can do by way of initially trying to loosen the hold on us – moderns – of the idea that somehow love's being in our self-interest is impossible.

Epilogue

This book has had relatively little to say about rival modern interpretations of the *Lysis*. This is for two reasons. The first reason is that it is one of the general and stated aims of the series to which the book belongs to engage first and foremost with *Plato*, and with his text. The second, and more important, reason is that for the most part other modern interpreters have – in our view – tended to give up too easily on Plato and his argument; and not to do that was the second, and crucial, part of our brief in approaching the *Lysis*. We quote a recent writer, who seems to us accurately to catch the spirit of the generality of modern interpretations:

Contemporary interpretations of the *Lysis* appear to be governed by two commonplaces. The first is that the *Lysis* is not to be counted among Plato's nobler accomplishments and its contents may be judiciously ignored since the general topic it investigates is given a fuller and certainly more satisfying treatment in the *Symposium*. Perhaps no present-day writer on the *Lysis* has expressed this view with more verve or wit than W. K. C. Guthrie in his marvellously succinct one-line summation: 'Even Plato can nod.'¹ The second commonplace is that the *Lysis* not only provides rather fertile acreage for harvesting a crop of Socratic doctrine regarding the meaning and philosophical import of such terms as *philos* and *philia*,² but that the crucial elements of that doctrine are not difficult to ascertain. Among those who are prepared to defend the claim that some positive theses regarding *philia* can be justly ascribed to Socrates in the *Lysis*, the view which has, by far, found the most favor is that Socrates, in the *Lysis*, is committed to a blatantly egoistic conception of friendship whereby no person is ever motivated either to enter into a friendship or to sustain a friendship³ unless the friendship is seen by that person to promote certain of her own interests, regardless of whether that

¹ Guthrie 1975: 143. 'There are many opinions about this dialogue [says Guthrie], and I must confess to my own, which is simply that it is not a success. Even Plato can nod. Cornford called it "an obscure and fumbling essay" on the same theme as a *Symposium* . . .' We cite more of Guthrie's view in n. 6 below.

² Original footnote omitted.

³ Footnote: '[b]y the phrase "sustain a friendship" I mean to include the performance of acts which one friend might expect of another friend *because they are friends*'.

friendship promotes the interests of her friend. Those who are willing to ascribe such a view to Socrates on the basis of what he says in the *Lysis* are often quick to point out that this view can be contrasted, to Socrates' great detriment, with Aristotle's much admired and oft-quoted view in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that a friend is someone who wishes good to his friend 'for the sake of his friend'.⁴

On the general view, if this author is right, (i) the *Lysis* is a philosophical, if not a dramatic, failure, and (ii) it is in any case either or both (a) a work which somehow looks forward to, while being much inferior to, the *Symposium*, and (b) a work which also compares badly with Aristotle's treatment of friendship.⁵

We (Penner and Rowe) believe that we have provided more than enough evidence to defend the *Lysis* against the charge that it is a failure, in any respect.⁶ On our view it is, certainly for its size, the equal of *any* Platonic dialogue, whether dramatically or philosophically (nor, of course, does such a judgement depend on our actually accepting Socrates' theory: there are plenty of ideas which fail to work, but beautifully – though as it happens *we* hold that there are no failures, beautiful or otherwise, in the *Lysis*). Nor – so we shall presently continue to argue our case – does the *Lysis* need to be

⁴ Michael Roth, the author of the excerpt (Roth 1995: 1–2), here refers to Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* IX, '1166a'. Roth then goes on himself to claim, while admitting – with disarming honesty – that 'I can make little or no sense of roughly the last three Stephanus pages of the text', (a) that the *Lysis* is at least the philosophical and dramatic equal of a number of 'other early Socratic dialogues', (b) that Socrates 'not only was not, in any interesting or detrimental sense, an egoist with respect to *philia*', but was fully alive to and fully endorsed the altruistic component of *philia*', and (c) that 'with respect to the roles that egoism and altruism play in the correct understanding of *philia*', he (Socrates) 'differs little, if at all, from Aristotle'.

⁵ We shall have reason to look briefly at this treatment (and its counterpart in Aristotle's other ethical treatise, the *Eudemian Ethics*), later on in this Epilogue.

⁶ One of the harshest judgements is Guthrie's; see n. 1 above. He continues in the paragraph following the one cited there: 'The failure is in method and presentation. Though ostensibly another example of the Socratic method in operation, anyone seeking to discover it would be well advised to turn instead to the *Euthyphro*, *Laches* or *Meno*. Socrates not only gives an unappetizing view of friendship, but appears to be completely at the mercy of the ambiguities of the Greek word for it. Why should he himself be the dupe of these ambiguities, instead of (as elsewhere) having them uttered by someone else – even trapping him into uttering them – in order to lead him to an awareness of them and so assist him maieutically? Or why should he himself indulge in (or be the victim of) sophistic and fallacious arguments without a hint as to the true solution? True, he may do this with complacent Sophists, stringing them along and foiling them with the sort of arguments they themselves delight in, but here, if it is deliberate, he is practising his verbal conjuring on boys of an age to be still under *paidagōgoi* and liable to a parental whipping (208D–E). If "his only desire in talking to the boys was to make them use their minds" (E. Hamilton), he chose an outrageously sophisticated and brutal method of doing it. He also appears as a follower of Protagoras in teaching that "on every subject there are two contrary arguments". He must have left the poor boys thoroughly bewildered' (Guthrie 1975: 143–4; footnotes omitted). Not so, we – Penner and Rowe – loudly respond; they are not, finally, able to go the whole distance with Socrates, but *bewildered* they certainly are not. (And that by itself tells us that we – Plato's modern readers – might do well to try a bit harder.)

saved by being treated as an unsuccessful attempt to do what the *Symposium* does more successfully. We deny furthermore that any comparison with the Aristotelian treatment(s) of *philia* will be to the ‘detriment’ of the *Lysis*. One tendency in more ‘charitable’ readings of the dialogue – i.e. those that set out to apply the ‘principle of charity’⁷ in due measure – is actually to try to assimilate the outcomes of the *Lysis* to those of Aristotle’s discussions of friendship, as if these represented some kind of gold standard: so most recently, and most determinedly, Bordt 1998.⁸ This tendency too, we think, though in a way more amiable, must be resisted with the same vigour. This is not least because, in our firm view, the treatment of *philia* in the *Lysis* is actually in important respects *superior* to what Aristotle has to say about the subject in his *Ethics*.⁹ But whether or not our case to that effect – which we do not have the space to argue with full explicitness – is accepted, it is also our view that to try to make the *Lysis* fit the template provided by Aristotle’s discussions gets the relationship between it and them precisely wrong: it is the Aristotelian outcomes that are descended, if somewhat indirectly, from the *Lysis*.

In the following pages, we shall attempt to give at least an outline account of the relationship between the *Lysis* and, respectively, Plato’s *Symposium* (§A) and Aristotle’s *Ethics* (§C), the intervening section (§B) being devoted to the *Phaedrus*, which contains Plato’s third account, with *Lysis* and *Symposium*, of *erōs* (passionate, or ‘romantic’, love). Our account will, in each case, amount in some ways to little more than a promissory note, and there will be no stated time or place for the delivery of the promise. Nevertheless, it will presumably be useful for the reader to have sketched in outline what kind of relationship *might* exist, given our analysis of the *Lysis*, between this dialogue and those other works. In the process of offering that sketch, we shall also find ourselves providing a more general picture of – our general perspective on – the place of the *Lysis* both in the Platonic corpus and in the context of the Academy (with which, as is well known, Aristotle was himself closely associated in the early part of his career). We shall close (§D) with some even briefer remarks about the ways in which the *Lysis* and/or the theory it sponsors may have affected the subsequent course of Greek – and then Roman – philosophy.

⁷ The principle of charity: only to accuse an author of incompetence, stupidity or any other failing if no other reasonable explanation is available for what might look like incompetence, stupidity, etc.

⁸ See also Bolotin 1979, and Roth 1995 (cf. n. 4 above).

⁹ Especially, that is, insofar as Aristotle has abandoned the Socratic theory outlined in Part II above.

(A) THE LYSIS AND THE SYMPOSIUM

A great deal of the work that we might have needed to do in this section has already been done for us by Anthony Price. A remarkable aspect of the *Symposium*, he comments, ‘is its loyalty to the Socratic psychology of the *Lysis*¹⁰ – ‘remarkable’, because, as he (Price) also holds, Plato no longer ‘accepted a Socratic psychology’.¹¹ We shall in a moment come back to, and propose to reject, this further claim; meanwhile we welcome with open arms Price’s acknowledgement that the psychology of the *Symposium* is in fact that of the *Lysis*, and take that acknowledgement as grounds enough for our not arguing the case independently (though in fact the evidence for such a case is assembled in Rowe 1998). Price writes thus:

A remarkable aspect of the *Symposium* is its loyalty to the Socratic psychology of the *Lysis* . . . Agathon throws out the truism that love (*erōs*) is of beauty (197B5). Socrates elicits the thesis that its object is one’s own happiness by a brisk inference: the lover loves beautiful things to have them for himself; to love beautiful things is to love good things, and to have good things is to be happy; hence the lover desires to be happy (204D5–E7). Happiness is a final end; we need not ask why anyone wishes to be happy (205A2–3). This is not yet decisive, for it might apply to love, but not to desire universally. Even in its broadest sense, a man’s *loves* might be what we may call his *projects* (whether these be poetic, chrematistic, gymnastic, philosophic, or erotic, cf. 205A8–D8), but not his natural appetites or incidental inclinations. What I love may be altogether a function of the sort of life I wish to lead and the sort of man I wish to be, whereas what I desire may in part ride free of such central evaluations. It might be that, while all love and desire is for things that one lacks (200A9, E2–9), only all love is ultimately for happiness. *However, it serves Socrates’ present purpose, which is to say nothing against erotic desire, that he gives no hint of any divergence or conflict of the kind that serves in the Republic to distinguish rational and irrational desires* (4.436B8–441C2). And there is a sequence of particular indications that he is placing *all* desires within a eudaimonist perspective. He argues unqualifiedly that personified Love is a pauper: loving and lacking beautiful things, it must also lack all goods, for goods are beautiful (201A9–C5, cf. *Lysis* 216D2). Yet if its loves were only its projects, it would not have to lack any natural or incidental goods that did not fall within those. Further, even involuntary genital responses, male and female, are taken to express love (206D3–E1). Finally, love is taken to be evidenced by the behaviour of brutes (207A6–B6), and human physiological processes (C9–E1); yet if we were to extend the term ‘project’ beyond personal ideals to desires that are fundamental though unthinking, it would draw a line that was never Platonic. Rather, we must take the background assumption to be Socratic: happiness is the ultimate goal of all desire, animal as well as human. Erotic

¹⁰ Price 1997: 254 (in ‘Afterword (1997)').

¹¹ Price 1997: 255 n. 6. The grounds for this he provides in Price 1995: 8–14; on which see below.

desire has then to be accommodated as a special mode of desiring that which all desire desires; its definition is a theorem derived from a Socratic axiom.¹²

With the exception of the sentence in (our) italics, and with whatever changes would be necessary to adapt the terms of this account to those we have used in Parts I and II above, this passage seems to us to state the case pretty well: the psychology of the *Symposium* is the psychology of the *Lysis*. It is only Price's view that the *Lysis* fails 'either to define or to explain friendship', sc. while the *Symposium* does a better job of both, which causes him to treat the *Lysis* as merely 'setting the scene', and a 'point of departure', for the *Symposium*.¹³ If, as on our own view, the *Lysis* does not in fact fail in these respects, we shall be entitled to ask for a different account of the relationship between the two dialogues.

As a matter of fact Price has to work pretty hard to show how the *Symposium* succeeds, i.e. where the *Lysis* fails.

For all its ostensible failure, the *Lysis* ends its investigation of the grounds of desire (before it abruptly returns to friendship)¹⁴ with two suggestions that Plato was not later to take back: the object of desire is that which one lacks, and that which one lacks is that which one is deprived of (221D7–E3). Desire presupposes need, and the origin of need is loss. The goal of life is therefore to retrieve the place where one began . . . Unresolved in the *Lysis* is how to relate this conception to the notions of the similar [i.e., as we call it, the like] and the good, and how to incorporate it within an account of mutual friendship; it remains unexplained how the end of each man's desire may involve another individual, and how two individuals can benefit one another.¹⁵

An answer, Price claims, is forthcoming in the *Symposium*, in the climax of the priestess Diotima's discourse: we 'generate in the beautiful', create goodness in others whom, in so doing, we treat as ends rather than as means, and so achieve a vicarious immortality (but of a kind higher than that offered by our children, even poetry, codes of laws . . .).¹⁶ Now as should already be sufficiently clear, we (Penner and Rowe) do not find talk about treating people 'as ends rather than as means'¹⁷ a helpful way of

¹² Price 1997: 254–5; he admits in a footnote that '[t]his view was barely advanced [in his 1989].'

¹³ Price 1997 (and 1989): 14.

¹⁴ Here is one place where Price's understanding of the issues is clearly quite different from ours (Penner's and Rowe's); on our analysis there is no change of subject at the end of, or indeed anywhere else in, the *Lysis*.

¹⁵ Price 1997 (1989): 12. Price goes on to discuss how far the 'phantasy' in Aristophanes' speech in the *Symposium* might fill the gap in explanation (not very far).

¹⁶ The content of this sentence is distilled from Price 1997: 255–60.

¹⁷ 'If I view [the one I love] as a means and not an end, then his happy life cannot count in itself as a success for me': Price 1997: 98; repeated at 257.

talking about interpersonal love. But in any case it is actually Price who introduces it in the context of the *Symposium*, not Diotima, or Socrates. In truth, Socrates is considerably more explicit on the subject of means and ends in the *Lysis*: i.e. in 219B–220B, the passage on the ‘first friend’. That passage, on our analysis, suggested that other people will *inevitably* count as means – ‘friends for the sake of a friend’, indeed, not *true* friends at all (that is, in comparison with the ‘first friend’, the one not loved for the sake of some other ‘friend’); and the question is whether there is any concrete evidence in the *Symposium* passage that Diotima is, in the *Symposium*, taking a different view from the one argued for by Socrates in the *Lysis*. Our answer is in the negative: the priestess’s account of the highest immortality we can achieve, albeit concerned with the production of excellence (‘true excellence’: *alēthē*, sc. *aretē*, 212A4–5), is still an account of *the good that we all desire for ourselves, of our own happiness*. That, of course, is and must be common ground: Diotima begins with *our* happiness, and there is no sign that she is talking about anything else by the end of her account (rather the reverse: the argument never veers from the subject). For all Price’s talk about a ‘*transfigured egoism*’,¹⁸ and for all the eloquence of his case, egoism is what it remains.

We ourselves are not in the least inclined to deny that Diotima has in mind that happiness involves making other people better (wiser). What we do deny is that there is anything in the *Symposium* that takes us further in the direction Price thinks Plato ought to go than there is in the *Lysis*: that is, towards taking love as a matter of treating people as ends rather than as means. There seem to us to be no grounds for the claim that

‘[I]f bequeathing a way of life is to satisfy, even to some extent, an innate desire for survival, I must value its realization in another rather than in myself. If I view him as a means and not an end, then his happy life cannot count in itself as a success for me.’ The man who conceives the good vulgarly, and so desires physical and mental heirs only out of vainglory, fails to identify with them in the manner required if *their* life is to count as a kind of survival for *him*.¹⁹

What is said in this last sentence, Price admits, is speculation: in answer to the question ‘why, in general, should causing another to benefit be nearly as good as benefiting oneself’, he says that ‘Plato, regrettably, leaves it to us to speculate about an answer,’ and the long passage just quoted summarizes his speculations. But (1) we feel no need to share in Price’s (and others’)²⁰

¹⁸ Price 1997 (1989): 98 (our emphasis).

¹⁹ Price 1997: 257 (Afterword). The first two sentences – for which see above – are cited from 1997 (1989): 98.

²⁰ The question referred to in the preceding sentence arises from discussion of Irwin 1977: ‘Terence Irwin equates a desire to propagate what we value with “a desire to do the *second best* to ensuring our

particular project for rehabilitating the Plato of the *Symposium*; and (2) the fact that Price has to *speculate* about how Plato in the *Symposium* might have filled the gap supposedly left by the *Lysis* hardly gives one much confidence that the Plato of the *Symposium* is ahead – ‘ahead’, that is, by Price’s lights – of the Plato of the *Lysis*. On our own – Penner’s and Rowe’s – view, *Lysis* and *Symposium* offer us exactly the same sort of puzzle: how to account for our desire for the happiness of others within an egoistic framework. The *Symposium* may appear to give us somewhat different tools to work with, but we (Penner and Rowe again) remain to be convinced that they are not actually the same as the tools we are offered in the *Lysis*, and that it is more than the presentation of them that is different. ‘Some difference?’ (So someone might object.) ‘The *Symposium* is altogether richer and more sublime, soaring where the *Lysis* merely plods.’ But (we reply) that is a matter of presentation: the key idea in the *Symposium*, of *erōs* as desire for ‘procreation in the beautiful’ (206c ff.), is in essence a colourful elaboration of Socrates’ conclusion about the genuine lover at *Lysis* 222A6–7, albeit a brilliant – brilliantly coloured – and suggestive elaboration. That is, it adds nothing of philosophical substance.

Not in itself, maybe (the objector presses); what about the metaphysical trappings with which it now comes, in the *Symposium*? When Price claims that the Plato of the *Symposium* uses a (the) Socratic psychology but no longer believes in it, his claim rests partly on the combination, in the peroration of Diotima’s speech (her account of the ‘Greater Mysteries’ of Love), of that psychology with a Platonic metaphysics: that is, talk of Platonic ‘forms’, or rather of one of them, the Form of Beauty. Yet, even apart from the fact that we (Penner and Rowe) have yet to agree, and would on balance be inclined to dispute, that Platonic forms are not around in the *Lysis*, Price himself concedes, in relation to the *Symposium* itself, that ‘there is no sound inference from the Platonism of the . . . metaphysics [that Diotima goes on to introduce] against the Socratism of the antecedent psychology’.²¹ That is, even on Price’s own account, the ‘Socratic psychology’ remains unaffected whether or not developed in a context that includes forms. What seems primarily to motivate Price’s claim that Plato in the *Symposium* is now

own immortality in possession of what we value, if we can ensure its possession by others” [Irwin, p. 241]. However attractive, such remarks seem close to a bare assertion that giving is a satisfactory alternative to receiving (as is blatant in Irwin); but why, in general . . .? (Price 1989 (1997): 34). Price goes on in a note to reject Richard Kraut’s answer to the same sort of question.

²¹ Price 1995: 9. In a footnote, Price identifies a number of ways in which the Plato of the *Symposium* may be signalling what in Diotima’s account of *erōs* is ‘strictly Socratic’ and what is not: ‘he may be conveying by his wording that some theses (most importantly, that all desire is for the good, i.e. happiness) are strictly Socratic, others (as that specific *erōs* is for generation in beauty) only loosely Socratic, others again only distantly Socratic (the elaboration of the notion of generation in beauty for body and soul) or downright Platonic’ (n. 1, pp. 179–80).

distanced from that psychology is his, Price's, sense that the psychology in question is inadequate, fails to fit the phenomena:

Thus [in Diotima's account] sexual desires have a double aspect, being children at once of our ultimate ends, and of our physical make-up. The two aspects are wedded by the natural teleology that governs all living creatures: immortality is an end common to unconscious processes and conscious processes. Sexual desires are at once spontaneous responses (like sexual arousal) and immortal longings.

This conception fits the purposes of eulogy [sc. eulogy of *erōs* being the task set the various speakers at the banquet] in two ways. Firstly, it marginalizes, if it does not actually exclude, the sterilities of the practising pederast . . . Secondly . . . Socrates' conception would appear to exclude any real conflict between sexual desires and moral scruples: if all desires aim at the same long-term goal, achieving it demands judgement but not self-control. Now this might be doubted [sc. as an account of the way things are]. Borrow a different example, that of thirst, from the *Republic* (4.439b3–c7). Even if Socrates is right, might I still not feel thirsty at a time when I know, say for reasons of etiquette, that I must not drink? And might this not produce a conflict between thirst, urging me towards the happiness of drinking, and other considerations that tell decisively against drinking on behalf of happiness overall? This is plausible but not cogent. If all my desires share the final goal of my overall well-being, and I am of one mind in judging that this requires me not to drink, thirst cannot fuel a conflict of desire. What makes thirst refractory in the *Republic* is that it assigns to appetites a final goal of their own, namely, sensual pleasure (cf. 436aII, 439d8); then thirst may be inhibited (say by visions of a hangover, when the only drink available is gin), but it will tend to be deaf to the dry demands of prudence . . .

If the conception of desire in the *Symposium* remains Socratic, it is also precarious, for it is easier to suppose that desires that are rooted in the body have their own ends that are not identical to the goal of reason . . .²²

In other words (as we reconstruct Price's argument), (1) the *Symposium* contains a Socratic psychology; but (2) that psychology is inadequate, and (3) Plato at some point – as the *Republic*, e.g., shows – recognized as much; since (4) the *Symposium* sees Plato consciously moving beyond Socrates in various ways (especially in metaphysics), and (5) it suits Plato in any case, for the design of the *Symposium*, to adopt a psychology which finds no bad side to *erōs* or desire, (6) we have no strong reason for supposing that Plato still seriously supports that psychology. Indeed, charity may even prescribe that we do not suppose so. ‘Of course the upshot contradicts common sense, and may seem not so much innocent as myopic.’²³

²² Price 1995: 12–13.

²³ Price 1995: 14. Price continues: ‘Socrates owes us a redescription of the phenomena that we commonly take to constitute mental conflict. For this we must turn to an earlier and more thoroughly Socratic

We, of course, are not in the slightest inclined to accept this last judgement. On our account, the charitable thing would be to go the other way, and positively to insist that Plato – still, even if he might have been conscious of moving away from Socrates in other respects – continued to be loyal to the theory of desire, and *erōs*, which he had his character Socrates develop in the *Lysis*. But we cannot, and do not need to, settle this issue here.²⁴ Our purpose is limited to noticing the consequences for the relationship between the *Symposium* and the *Lysis* if our (Penner's and Rowe's) analysis of the latter dialogue is correct. The consequences, we claim, are that it is extremely difficult to distinguish between the psychological theories, and the relevant philosophical outcomes, of the two dialogues, and that the main differences are in terms of scale, colour and emphasis. We might be tempted to suggest that the *Lysis* could be seen as a kind of pen-and-ink sketch for the full oil-on-canvas version in the *Symposium*, were it not that this image too would tend to suggest that the *Lysis* was a relatively insignificant work, with little value in its own right. It is rather a miniature, set beside the full-size, gaudier canvas of the *Symposium*; with its own brilliance, both in terms of the development of its argument (the lines of which are more austere, less tinted by the dramatic context – or, better, tinted by context in a different, more subtle way), and in terms of its characterization and action. As for why Plato should have written both, one can only speculate. Both are – as we see them – intended to be listened to, or readable, at some level or other, by a large range of audiences. But it is the *Lysis* that is, surely, on any account the more difficult and demanding. Is it, perhaps, that the *Lysis* was written (*inter alia*) as a kind of school text – or as something that could become one, within the Academy? We shall find

dialogue, the *Protagoras*' – which, on Price's account, tries to give that redescription but (inevitably fails). 'Discarding eudaimonism as a thesis about all desire, and accommodating irrationality within a divided mind, Plato was to do fuller justice to the phenomena' (Price 1995: 27). This approach means that Price can, in principle, be fairly sympathetic to Martha Nussbaum's attempt (see Nussbaum 1986: ch. 6) to find a more authentic, i.e. less coolly Socratic and intellectual, account of *erōs* in the speeches of Aristophanes and Alcibiades in the *Symposium*: Price 1997: 260 n. 15. But on the face of it the juxtaposition of Aristophanes' and Alcibiades' conceptions of *erōs* with Socrates', given the whole context of the dialogue (among other things, with a strong undercurrent of *competition*, and emphasis on Socrates' superiority in wisdom), is not most naturally taken as raising any fundamental questions about the validity, or authenticity (i.e. to life), of the Socratic conception. (In a competition, orchestrated and refereed by Plato, between Socrates and an Aristophanes or an Alcibiades, can we really suppose that Socrates is supposed to *lose*? See e.g. Rowe 1998.)

²⁴ One should perhaps notice here that the results of stylistic analysis, if strictly interpreted, actually locate the *Symposium* – normally treated, in the modern period, as a 'middle' dialogue – as one of the *earliest* group of works (admittedly very large) in the Platonic corpus, along with the *Lysis*: see especially Kahn 2002, and Rowe 2003b. But this will not help much in the present context, since the *Phaedo* too, on the same basis, will belong to that early group, and according to Price the *Phaedo* is already talking in, or prefiguring, the language of mental conflict (Price 1995: 13–14).

some support for this speculation when we come to discuss Aristotle's relationship to the *Lysis*; for that one-time member of the Academy certainly did discuss the *Lysis*, at length and in depth.

What of the relation of the *Lysis* to parts of the corpus other than the *Symposium*? Its close connection with a range of other early dialogues – i.e. dialogues that, stylistically, seem to belong to the earliest group – has already been argued for in Part II above; and we have just proposed to add the *Symposium* to that group (see n. 24 above). On the other hand, the *Lysis* stands emphatically apart from the *Republic*, and, specifically, from Book IV of the *Republic*: that is, the book that Price identifies as '*assign[ing] to appetites a final goal of their own, namely, sensual pleasure*'. No longer is desire exclusively directed towards the good, as it is in the *Lysis* and the *Symposium*; and internal conflict now becomes possible at the level of action,²⁵ between different aspects or parts of the soul, each capable of causing the agent to act. Whereas in the *Lysis*, and in other dialogues that include the same psychological model, desire and belief are seen as always working together, without even the possibility of being at odds (that is, when it comes to action), the argument of *Republic* IV introduces a new model that from the start allows reason, 'appetite', and also a third 'part' or aspect of the soul, 'spirit' or *thumos*, to push – and to push the agent – in different directions. It is this, we hold, that represents the chief fault-line, as it were, in the Platonic corpus (or in the part of it that we are currently considering): there are dialogues that operate with a *Lysis*-like (or *Symposium*-like) psychology, and there are dialogues that operate with a *Republic*-type psychology. One of the latter, as it happens, is the *Phaedrus*, which among other things has Socrates develop an account of *erōs* that is firmly and specifically focused on a tripartite soul, comprising reason, 'spirit' and 'appetite', the latter two being respectively the white and black horses that the charioteer of reason must control on pain of not realizing its own goals (*Phaedrus* 246A ff.). Part of the motivation for the *Phaedrus*, we speculate, may have been a desire on Plato's part to adapt his account of *erōs* to the new account of soul. 'For myself,' says Socrates at the beginning of the dialogue,

in no way do I have leisure for these things [sc. the interpretation of myths like that of Boreas and Oreithuia], and the reason for it, my friend [Phaedrus], is this. I am not yet capable, in accordance with the Delphic inscription, of 'knowing myself'; it therefore seems absurd to me that while I am still ignorant of this subject I should

²⁵ Even on the 'Socratic' model, internal conflict of a sort will be possible: between *beliefs*, or between beliefs and what might be termed 'non-executive', or mere 'felt', desires (as Price concedes: cf. the passage from Price 1995: 12–13 cited in the text to n. 22 above). All that is ruled out is conflict of a different sort: conflict that involves irrational desires causing an agent to act contrary to his beliefs.

inquire into things which do not belong to me. So then saying goodbye to these things, and believing what is commonly thought about them, I inquire . . . not into these but into myself, to see whether *I am actually a beast more complex and violent than Typhon, or both a tamer and a simpler creature, sharing some divine and un-Typhonic portion by nature.* (*Phaedrus* 229E4–230A7)

Might this not be Plato's way of announcing his new project, and acknowledging the difference between the two views of the human soul: the one, the Socratic, which excludes conflict from the soul, and the other, that of *Republic* IV, which sees it as the location of the most violent inner conflict?

But there is more to be said about the *Lysis* and the *Phaedrus*.

(B) THE LYSIS AND THE PHAEDRUS

As we have seen, one of the principal subject-matters of the *Lysis* is *erōs*²⁶ – let us call it ‘romantic’ love – and, with *erōs*, the questions how one is to speak to one’s *erōmenos*, darling, and which lovers (*erastai*) the darling should welcome. The *Phaedrus* here offers something of a parallel. Its central topic is speeches in general, but it includes three pretty remarkable examples of speeches on that second question in the *Lysis* (which lovers the darling should welcome). The three speeches take up more than half of the *Phaedrus*. Nor do the similarities end there. True, the last part of the *Phaedrus* takes off on a more general treatment of persuasive speech. But even that treatment comes back, in the end, to the subject of *dialectic*, and the relationship between the true expert in speech (*logoi*) and his pupil: a relationship that is scarcely distinguishable either from that between the true lovers of Socrates’ second speech on *erōs* earlier in the *Phaedrus* (see especially 254E ff.) or from that between the ‘genuine and not pretended lover’ and the beloved in the *Lysis*.²⁷

²⁶ Once again, we insist that *erōs*, in Socrates’ account, remains a distinct *species* of desire. The *Symposium* – or Diotima’s speech there – may sometimes give the impression of being in danger of treating *erōs* as if it were *just* desire for the good (all desire being for the good, and desire for the good being figured as *erōs*, which might appear to leave no room for distinct species of desire). But *erōs* nevertheless retains its own special features: desiring the good does not in every case lead to loving beautiful boys; if Diotima’s account may seem sometimes to suggest that it does, as in her treatment of the ‘lesser Mysteries’ (see especially 208C1 ff.), that is because her account is specifically of *erōs* (sc. whereas the *Lysis* ranges more widely). (Price 1997: 256 n. 8 suggests that ‘the two mysteries [sc. ‘Lesser’ and ‘Greater’] display the motivations distinctive of two of the parts of the soul in the *Republic*’. Not so, unless we already assume the *Symposium* to be working with a *Republic*-like division of the soul, which the context itself gives us no clear reason for supposing: see above. Diotima is rather talking about different kinds of *beliefs* about how happiness is achieved: beliefs that suppose it to revolve around honour, and memory, and beliefs that it involves the production of ‘true excellence’.)

²⁷ ‘So because he receives every kind of service, as if equal to the gods, from a lover who is not pretending (*schēmatizomenos*) but genuinely (*alēthōs*) in love, and because he naturally feels affection for a man

That the *Lysis* and *Phaedrus* complement each other in this way, despite their fundamental differences, is in line with our general view that the significant doctrinal shift in the Platonic corpus, perhaps even including what are agreed to be the dialogues written last,²⁸ is that abandonment of Socratic psychology – Socratic intellectualism – which results from the introduction of the theory of irrational (executive) desires in *Republic* iv. It is this shift that makes possible the first speech of Socrates' in the *Phaedrus* (237A–241D): *of course* the darling, the beloved, ought to give in to the non-lover . . . – *if*, that is, all *erōs* stemmed from irrational desires, i.e. desires for pleasures as opposed to desires for good. But, as we then discover in Socrates' second speech, not all *erōs* is like that (though some is). What was said about *erōs* in the first speech is true only of degenerate versions of *erōs*, versions that result from what we (or at any rate modern Platonists) would speak of more in terms of *lust* than in terms of *being in love*.

The important contrast, there in the first speech,²⁹ was between two kinds of things – evidently intended as mutually exclusive – which rule

who renders him service, even if perhaps in the past he has been prejudiced against him by hearing his schoolfellows or others say that it is shameful to associate with a lover, and repulses the lover for that reason, as time goes on he is led both by his age, and by necessity, to admit him to his company . . .’ (255A1–B1).

Now follows a sentiment that might look thoroughly and fundamentally at odds with the *Lysis* . . . ‘for it is fated that bad shall never be friend to bad, nor good fail to be friend to good’ (255A1–B2: tr. Rowe, with ‘bad’ substituted for the ‘evil’ of the original, 1986, version). Does the *Lysis* not rule out friendship between the good in more or less the same breath as ruling out friendship between the bad – and does this not drive a coach and horses through our (Penner's and Rowe's) claims about the relationship between *Phaedrus* and *Lysis* (i.e. as – in some respects – ‘complementing’ each other)? Hardly. The Socrates of the *Phaedrus* is as clear as his counterpart in the *Lysis* that there are no wise people (278D3–6); provided that in the *Phaedrus* goodness at least depends on wisdom, the person Socrates here in 255 calls ‘good’ is not, then, the (maximally) self-sufficiently good person of whom Socrates declares, in the *Lysis*, that he cannot be friends with/to the good – where ‘good’, of course, is not restricted to persons (*Lysis* 214E–215C). Here is a proposal: that at *Phaedrus* 255A–B, by contrast with what he does in the *Lysis*, Socrates is talking exclusively about good people, and understanding goodness in terms of their function, which is – let us say – to act wisely. Since no one has knowledge of the good, no one is *perfectly* good at that function. So the good persons in the *Phaedrus* – existing good persons, evidently, in this particular context – will be people who are just *pretty* good at getting things right. In any case, crucially, the people in question are precisely *not* self-sufficient, which is why they need to do philosophy together. In this way the connection between the good person of the *Phaedrus* and the good that is loved in the *Lysis* (the ‘first friend’) turns out to be that of means to end; which is as it should be, given the Penner–Rowe account of the *complementarity* of the two dialogues. (Alternatively, ‘for it is fated that bad shall never be friend to bad, nor good fail to be friend to good’ is meant to conjure up what everybody, anyway, thinks; that is, Socrates is ‘talking with the vulgar’, as he so often does. Still, there had better be a way in which what everybody thinks will turn out to be true.)

²⁸ This is not to deny that there are various *innovations*: e.g., the objectivity of forms, arguments for the existence of forms, myths or appeals to flux in the perceptible world. But these we treat as developments of Socratic ideas rather than divergences.

²⁹ The passage we focus on in the following is *Phaedrus* 237D3–238C4.

and lead us: the desire for pleasure that is in our nature (*emphutos . . . epithumia hēdonōn*) and the *acquired judgement* which aims at what is best (*epiktētos doxa, ephiemenē tou aristou*).³⁰ These, the first speech tells us, when in situations of conflict, involve the one dragging us irrationally towards pleasure, the strength of the other ('it has the name *sōphrosune*') leading us to what is best.³¹ This particular version of *erōs*, based entirely on the desire for pleasure that is in our nature, is lumped together with gluttony and drunkenness as another form of a polymorphous *hubris* (an 'excess' that 'has many names', 238A2), and it is the only kind of *erōs* described in the first speech. Such *erōs* makes the lover envious, in the search for what is immediately pleasant (239A7), and anxious to keep his darling away from other beneficial associations, especially that association from which he would become wisest, divine philosophy (239A7–B9). Thus the only form of *erōs* envisaged in the first speech is one that produces action solely by means of irrational desires for what is immediately pleasant: something that is always dragging us away from wisdom (let alone from any kind of deliberation about what may happen over time). This is a form of desire – and of *erōs* – that is absent from the sort of (Socratic) theory discussed in our Part II above.

The dismal picture of *erōs* in Socrates' first speech leads to his recantation in his second, the 'palinode'. Now, in this second speech, *erōs* is no longer restricted to irrational appetite for the pleasure of the moment. In fact the primary case of *erōs* that is considered in the palinode is, we would argue, all but identical with the very case of ('genuine') *erōs* that Socrates puts before us in the *Lysis*. We now have *erōs* originating, in the primary or best form, from the rational part of the soul – and after that we are given a second-best form, still higher than the degenerate *erōs* of the appetitive ('hubristic', 'excessive') part of the soul, originating from the part of the soul having to do with honour:

But if they turn to a coarser way of life, devoted not to wisdom but to honour, then perhaps, I suppose [says Socrates], when [lover and beloved] are drinking or in some other moment of carelessness the licentious horses in the two of them

³⁰ The significance of 'acquired' shows up in the way in which, in our formulation of Socratic intellectualism, we insist that the web of belief of the agent is constantly changing – with respect to the particularities or generalities of the agent's situation, with respect to other sciences, and with respect to what is good – even as he or she deliberates. See esp. Chapter 10, nn. 47, 49.

³¹ The contrast here is the same as that between the rational and irrational parts of the soul that we find in Book x of the *Republic*, as well as in Book iv, though the first speech in the *Phaedrus*, like *Republic* x, collapses together the second and third parts of the soul argued for in Book iv. (The third, spirited part, as we shall see, re-emerges in the *Phaedrus* in the reference to honour in the second truest form of *erōs* in Socrates' second speech.)

catch them off their guard, and bringing them together take that choice which is called blessed by the many, and carry it through; and once having done so, they continue with it, but sparingly, because what they are doing has not been approved by their whole mind (*dianoia*). So these too spend their lives as friends, though not to the same degree as the other pair [sc. the ideal pair that does not give in to appetite] . . . (*Phaedrus* 256B6–D1)

So once they have given in to their black horses ('akratically'; 'losing control of themselves'), having sex becomes a regular habit with them. And that, we propose, is why they are not friends 'to the same degree as the other pair' – because sex interferes with their pursuit of wisdom; but also their lack of wisdom, or attachment to wisdom, is what causes their 'carelessness' in the first place. Thus *true* friendship, *true* love, even in the *Phaedrus*, turns out to be quasi-Socratic.

We may indeed raise doubts about whether the *erōs* of irrational appetite – *erōs* as described in Socrates' first speech – is, in the end, really to be understood as a version of *erōs* at all. Take what Socrates says at 250E1–251AI:

. . . the man whose initiation [to the Form of Beauty] was not recent, or who has been corrupted, does not move keenly from here to there, to beauty itself, when he observes its namesake here, so that he does not revere it when he looks at it, but surrendering himself to pleasure does his best to go on four feet like an animal and father offspring, and keeping close company with excess (*hubris*) has no fear or shame in pursuing pleasure contrary to nature.

Socrates nowhere says that this is not *erōs*; but it is, clearly, a very low grade of *erōs*: a left-handed (*skaios*) form, as he puts it at 266A3–5. In certain contexts, as at 265E–266B, he will treat this irrational *erōs* simply as a species of *erōs* co-ordinate with the other two kinds – despite the fact that these two, evidently, are alone cases of *divine* madness; for the gods give only what benefits us (244A3–8).³² However, it must surely be

³² This treatment has not said much about divine madness. We are inclined to regard the references to madness – as though there were some not altogether rational form of cognition that the lover has – as Plato at play, doing a Stesichorus (see *Phaedrus* 243E–244A) on the genuine madness that belongs to the degenerate form of *erōs*: 'You want to talk about madness – I'll tell you about madness: the madness of wisdom.' If one asks what the *divine* madness is that goes beyond the madness of the degenerate *erōs*, and what status being 'sent by the gods' lends to this madness, there are a number of indications that we should not take these references to its divine origin too seriously. First of all, consider the ranking of nine lives at *Phaedrus* 248D2–E3. The best life (1) is that of a lover of wisdom or of beauty or devoted to the Muses or to love; then comes (2) the law-abiding king; then (3) the politician, the money-maker; then (4) the expert in physical training or medicine; then *in fifth place only* the prophetic life, and *in sixth place only* the life of the poet. (Divine dispensation has not pushed either of these forms of madness up very high in the rankings: above craftsmen, farmers; sophists, demagogues; the tyrant.) What, then, of the first-ranked life? How does the lover

primarily in contrast to ‘left-handed’ lovers that the preferred, or ideal, kind of lovers are described as ‘those who are *truly* in love’ (*tōn hōs alēthōs erōn tōn*: 253C2–3; cf. ‘a lover who is not pretending but genuinely/truly in love’, 255A2–3).³³

Here in 251A ff., Socrates sets true ‘romantic’ love within a wider context of affection (*agapan*: 253A6) and friendship (*philia* and cognates: 253C5, 255E2, 256C7–E4).³⁴ What more there is to this friendship is not just that when the pair are no longer lover and beloved, they remain friends (256D1–3), important though this is to Plato’s account of the *erōs* that is divine madness. The extra element in the case of the truest *erōs* is also, and more fundamentally, that ‘the better elements of [the] minds [of lover and beloved] get the upper hand by drawing them to a well-ordered life, and to philosophy [*philosophia*, ‘love of wisdom’], [so that] they pass their life here in blessedness and harmony . . .’ (256A7–B1). The secondary form of *erōs*, midway between the truest form and the degenerate form, turns to a coarser and non-philosophical way of life, that of honour (256B7–C1).

The lovers whose *erōs* is of the truest sort, then, and their beloveds, are those who are most friends and who seek wisdom together.³⁵ The lovers who follow Zeus

seek that the one they love should be someone like Zeus in respect of his soul; so they look to see whether he is naturally disposed towards philosophy and towards leadership, and when they have found him and fall in love they do everything to make him of such a kind. (252E1–5; cf. 253A6–B1, B7–C2).

of wisdom differ from the lover of beauty or the person devoted to love? We know that the one who gets his wings first is the person ‘who has lived the philosophical life without guile or who has united his love for his boy with philosophy’ (249A2); that if the highest form of love is that which we find in the followers of Zeus, this will be a matter of ‘someone naturally disposed towards philosophy and towards leadership’ (252E3); and that the truest form of *erōs* (and so of love of beauty) involves precisely the better elements in the minds of lover and beloved, leading them both to the love of wisdom (*philosophia*) and happiness (256A7–B1). (Love of wisdom is of course the very thing that the degenerate *erōs* of the first speech tries to turn the beloved away from: 239B3–6.) We suggest that wisdom is the real point, not some species of madness. As he does so often, Plato is having the reader on, and yet making a serious point at the same time. The serious point in the *Phaedrus* is the very same as the point we have found in the *Lysis*: the need for wisdom. On this the two dialogues – representing respectively Plato and Socrates? – do not disagree.

³³ Other parts of Socrates’ treatment suggest rather an analysis in terms of *degrees*: so, e.g., that passage at 256B6–D1 – the passage describing the lovers in the primary case as being ‘more friends’ than those experiencing the secondary version (what one might call ‘honour-*erōs*’: 256C7).

³⁴ 252E1–253C2 provides an account of the – ‘friendly’? – ‘service’ (*therapeia*, 255A1) the lover gives his beloved. We suppose that friendship does not enter at all into the supposed *erōs* described in Socrates’ first speech (in the passage quoted just above, 250E3–251A1: ‘. . . surrendering himself to pleasure does his best to go on four feet like an animal . . .’).

³⁵ See also the important references in n. 32 above.

Similarly, we propose, with the followers of the other gods.³⁶ And the lovers themselves seek wisdom in their developing love for their darling (252E5 ff.):

. . . if they have not previously set foot on this way, they undertake it now, both learning from wherever they can and finding out for themselves; and . . . because they count their beloved responsible for these very things they love him still more, and if it is from Zeus that they draw, like Bacchants, they pour the draught over the soul of their loved one and make him as like their god as possible. Those in their turn who followed with Hera seek someone regal in their nature, and when they have found him they do all the same things in respect of him. Those who belong to Apollo and each of the other gods proceed in the same way in accordance with their god, and seek that their boy should be of the same nature, and when they acquire him, imitating the god themselves and persuading and disciplining their beloved they draw him into the way of life and pattern of the god . . . (252E5–253B7)

The picture we see of the truest form of *erōs* in the *Phaedrus* is of a friendship between lover and beloved that is based upon a joint seeking of wisdom, though that seeking is primarily described as being led by the older person, the lover. This is exactly what we have found in the *only* forms of *erōs* that we find in the *Lysis*. Indeed, the same is true, *mutatis mutandis* of the only form of *philia* that we find in the *Lysis*. In the end *philia* is a matter of friend seeking the good of friend by the means of the joint seeking of wisdom. The palinode of the *Phaedrus* thus strongly confirms the account of *erōs*, and of *philia*, that we have presented in our account of the *Lysis*. The palinode sees Plato restoring *Socratic* friendship and *erōs* to the best human beings after the disaster that befalls most humans as a result of the parts of the soul doctrine – the disaster that consists in the degenerate *erōs* of appetite.

(c) ARISTOTLE AND THE *LYSIS*

‘Every sort of expert knowledge and every inquiry, and similarly every action and undertaking, seems to seek some good. Because of that, people are right to affirm that the good is “that which all things seek”.’ Thus Aristotle at the

³⁶ We here assume, in line with what is proposed in Rowe 1986, *ad* 253B1–2, b3, that Hera, Apollo and the other gods are also wise, but represent wisdom in different guises: as (ideal) kingship or sovereignty, in the case of Hera, as composition of the highest ‘music’, in the case of Apollo . . . Their ‘followers’, then, are all lovers of wisdom (philosophers). Wisdom appears to be one of the essential attributes of (Platonic) divinity: see e.g. *Phaedrus* 278D, *Symposium* 204A, 202B–C, *Lysis* 218A. (Zeus’s ‘leadership’: another reference to kingship; or to the different kind of ‘leadership’ that belongs to the expert in dialectic (276E4–277A4)? Compare the mysterious ‘leader’, *ho hēgoumenos*, who appears at *Symposium* 210A6, guiding the initiate in the ‘Greater Mysteries’.)

beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.³⁷ In similar vein, even after Book IV and the introduction of irrational parts of the soul (which might seem to imply that *not* all actions aim at the good), Plato has the Socrates of the *Republic* describe the good as ‘[w]hat every soul pursues – and does everything for the sake of this’ (505DII–EI). Like Plato, what Aristotle has in mind is *rational* action: insofar as human beings are rational, all their actions and undertakings aim at the good. But on his view, as on the view Plato promotes in the *Republic*, human beings combine rationality with irrationality. Further, the irrational in us can overcome the rational: we *can* behave ‘*akratically*’, i.e. in an ‘un-self-controlled’ way. Again like the Plato of the *Republic*,³⁸ Aristotle deliberately turns his back on Socratic intellectualism (the theory we described in Part II). So e.g. in *Nicomachean Ethics* III.4:

That wish [*boulēsis*, i.e. *rational* wishing] is for the end, we have already said; but to some it seems to be for the good, whereas to others it seems to be for the *apparent* good. The consequence, for those who say that the object of wish is the good, is that what the person making an incorrect choice wishes for is not wished for (for if it is wished for, it will also be good; but in fact it may have been bad);³⁹ while for those who say that it is the apparent good that is wished for, the consequence is that there is nothing naturally wished for, only what seems an object of wish to each particular person; and different things appear so to different people. But if, then, we are not content with these views, should we say that the good is without qualification and in truth the object of wish, whereas what appears good to a given person is the object of wish for that person? We shall then be saying that for the person of excellence the object of wish is the one that is truly so, whereas for the bad person it is as chance would have it . . . (1113a15–26, tr. Rowe, in Broadie and Rowe 2002)

So: what is ‘without qualification and in truth’ wished for is what the person in the best condition – the good person, the one who is as he should be – wishes for; but as a matter of fact different kinds of people actually ‘wish for’, want, different kinds of things. Aristotle is here, in a way, making the same choice as the boys Lysis and Menexenus in the *Lysis*. As it is put to Lysis and Menexenus, either the good ‘belongs’ to (and so is desired by) everyone, or the bad ‘belongs’ to the bad, the good to the good, and the neither-good-nor-bad to the neither-good-nor-bad; as Aristotle phrases it, either everyone wishes, rationally, for the good, or people wish for different

³⁷ I.1, 1094a1–3.

³⁸ See e.g. *Republic* IV, 438A–439A, which argues for the existence of ‘brute’ appetites (*epithumiai*), which have no reference to the goodness or badness of what is desired.

³⁹ Aristotle takes it for granted that it is absurd to say that ‘what the person making an incorrect choice wishes for is not wished for’. We (Pennet and Rowe) think him too hasty in taking that line.

things (because they wish for what *appears* good to them, and what appears to them depends on their condition). Lysis and Menexenus, and then – up to a point – Aristotle, choose the second option. But Aristotle makes that crucial qualification: there is only one sort of person who judges correctly, and so wishes for what is *truly* ‘fine and pleasant’ – the person of excellence. By contrast with this person, ‘most people are deceived, and the deception seems to come about because of pleasure; for it appears a good thing when it is not. So they choose what is pleasant as something good, and they avoid pain as something bad’ (1113a31; 1131a33–b2).⁴⁰

No one would suggest that Aristotle is actually thinking of the *Lysis* at this point in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, any more than he was in the first chapter.⁴¹ But there is no doubt at all that the *Lysis* formed part of the background against which Aristotle was writing: for anyone who begins reading either of his two treatments of *philia*, in *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII–IX or in *Eudemian* VII, there is no mistaking their connection with the *Lysis* (or: no mistaking a connection, if we already know – as we do – that Aristotle read Plato closely). Take the following two parallel passages as an illustration of the point – one from the *Nicomachean*, one from the *Eudemian*:

(i) But there are not a few disputes about the subject [sc. *philia*]. Some people suppose that it is a kind of likeness, and that those that are alike are friends, which is the source of sayings such as ‘Like tends to like’, and ‘Jackdaw to jackdaw’, and so on; whereas others take the contrary position and say that like to like is a matter of the proverbial potters. And in relation to these same things they pursue the question further, taking it to a more general and scientific level – Euripides claiming that ‘Ever lusts the earth for rain’ when it has become dry, ‘Lusts too the mighty heaven, filling full with rain, | To fall on earth’, Heraclitus talking of hostility bringing together, the divergent making finest harmony, and of all things coming to be through strife; but taking a view contrary to these is Empedocles, for one, who says that like seeks like. Now these problems that come from natural science we may set to one side, since they are not germane to the

⁴⁰ Some of the context of this set of ideas is conveniently provided by the beginning of the *Eudemian Ethics*: Aristotle there takes issue with an inscription at Delos, which implies that good, fine and pleasant do not all belong to the same thing. ‘We do not agree with this. For happiness, being finest and best of all things, is most pleasant’ (1.1, 1214a7–8). That is, what is truly good, truly fine and truly pleasant is the same thing, sc. whatever may *appear* good, fine or pleasant to particular individuals.

⁴¹ Or perhaps one should claim just that? See *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.2, 1094a18–22 – which, along with *Eudemian* 1.8, 1218b10–12, Price 1989 (1997): 10 describes as containing ‘Aristotle’s more developed analogue to Plato’s “first dear” ([*Lysis*] 219D1): ‘If then there is some end in our practical projects that we wish for because of itself, while wishing for the other things we wish for because of it, and we do not choose everything because of something else (for if *that* is the case, the sequence will go on to infinity, making our desire empty and vain), it is clear that this will be the good, i.e. the chief good.’

present inquiry; let us look further into those that belong to the human sphere and relate to characters and affective states, e.g. whether friendship comes about among all types, or whether it is impossible for those who are bad characters to be friends, and whether there is one kind of friendship or more than one . . . (*Nicomachean Ethics* VIII.1, 1154a32–b13; tr. Rowe)

(2) Many questions are raised about friendship – first, as those do who take in wider considerations and extend the term. For some hold that like is friend to like, whence the sayings ‘Ever god brings like to like’, ‘Jackdaw to jackdaw’, ‘And thief knows thief and wolf his fellow thief.’ And the natural philosophers even arrange the whole of nature in a system by assuming as a first principle that like goes to like, which is why Empedocles said the dog sat on the tile because it was most like him. Some people, then, give this account of the friend; but others say that opposite is friend to opposite, because it is what is loved and desired that is friend to everything, and the dry does not desire the dry but the wet – whence the sayings ‘Earth loves the rain’ and ‘In all things change is sweet’ – change being to the opposite; whereas like is inimical to like, for ‘Potter is angry with potter’, and animals that are nourished by the same things are hostile to each other. These views, then, diverge to that sort of degree; for some people say the like is friend, the opposite hostile – ‘The less is rooted enemy to the more | For ever, and begins the day of hate’, and moreover those opposed are separated by locality, while friendship seems to bring together, while others say that opposites are friends, and Heraclitus rebukes the poet who composed the line ‘Would that strife might perish out of heaven and earth’, for, he says, there would be no harmony if there were not high and low, nor would there be living creatures without female and male, which are opposites.

These, then, are two opinions about friendship . . . ; but there are others that are closer and more akin to (*oikeiōterai*) the facts of observation (*ta phainomena*). Some think that it is not possible for the bad to be friends, but only for the good. Others think it strange that mothers should not love their own children . . . Others hold that only what is useful is a friend, the proof being that all men actually do pursue the useful, and discard what is useless even in their own persons (as the older Socrates used to say, instancing spittle, hair and nails) . . . (*Eudemian Ethics* VII.1, 1235a5–39; Rackham’s translation, heavily modified)

It is, surely, clear enough that these two passages stand in some sort of relationship to *Lysis* 213D6–215C2, where Socrates unsuccessfully looks for help from the poets and the natural scientists: getting from them and then rejecting first the thesis that like is friend to like, then that unlike/opposite is friend to unlike/opposite. That same *Lysis* passage also combines with these two theses the idea that bad cannot be friend to bad – and for a fleeting moment proposes that it is good, alone, that is friend to good. What Aristotle seems to have done is to take a small piece of Platonic dialectic, or a version or memory of it, and adapt it for his statement of the

disputes and problems the subject of friendship raises. The last sentence in the *Eudemian* version, '[o]thers hold that only what is useful is a friend . . .', might itself be taken as a reference to the sequel to *Lysis* 213D6–215C2: part of what Socrates there turns out to get from his encounter with the poets and the scientists is that it is *the good* that is the friend – and has the good not been understood as the useful (*chrēsimon*: cf. 215B6 *chreia*)?⁴²

However it is the following moves in both *Ethics* that seem to us to show most clearly the descent of Aristotle's discussions from the discussion of the *Lysis*. Both works set out, in slightly different ways, to solve the difficulties and/or disputes about *philia* by asking *what the object of love is*. This they do, not by surveying friendships as they actually exist in the world at large, but by raising the general, and *Lysis*-like, question: what is it that human beings love, or desire, or wish for? Now it is clear from the beginning of both discussions of *philia* that what Aristotle has in mind is actually a rather specific treatment of *philia* as it would ordinarily have been understood by contemporary speakers of Greek; which is close enough to our 'friendship' to make the latter a reasonable translation, i.e. without the need for the scare quotes that were needed most of the way through the *Lysis*. Thus we should expect him to use the *phil-* class of terms in a correspondingly specialized way; and so he does – with one exception: having laid out the disputes/questions that exist about the subject, in the *Nicomachean* version he suggests that things will be clarified 'once we have reached an understanding of what is loved', where 'what is loved' is *to philēton*, a cognate of *philia* (the *Eudemian* version makes a similar but more complicated move, which we shall refer to briefly at a later point):

But perhaps the issues will become clear once we have reached an understanding of what is loved (*philēton*). For it seems that not everything is loved (*phileisthai*),

⁴² In the present context, the attribution in the Eudemian passage to 'the older Socrates' of the idea that the friend is the useful is itself interesting. Socrates is called *gerōn* to distinguish him from a younger namesake, who appears in the *Statesman*; he is presumably Plato's usual 'Socrates' – and the Socrates with whom Aristotle tends to associate that set of ideas labelled (by us moderns) as 'intellectualism' (see Rowe 2002). Though the examples Aristotle introduces here in the *Eudemian Ethics* are not in the *Lysis*, it is plainly not much of a step from the idea that we throw away 'things of ours that are useless' (*ta achrēsta . . . hautōn*) to Socrates' re-identification there of what is 'ours' as what is useful.

For a reasonably complete list of the connections between Aristotle's treatments of *philia* and the *Lysis*, see Price 1989 (1997): 9–12 (the most significant connection being, 'perhaps', according to Price, that 'Aristotle . . . grounds, and classifies, kinds of friendship by reference to different categories of things that are loved . . . Hence both Plato and Aristotle view friendship against the general background of the structure of human desire', 9–10; cf. below).

only what is loveable (*phileton*), and that the loveable is good, or pleasant, or useful [so Aristotle goes on to posit three kinds of friendship, based respectively on excellence, ‘utility’ and pleasure]; but that would seem to be useful through which some good or pleasure comes about, so that it will be the good and the pleasant that are loveable as ends.⁴³ Is it, then, the good that people love, or what is good for themselves? For sometimes the one is at odds with the other – and there is a similar difference in the case of the pleasant too. It seems to be the case that each person loves what is good for himself, and that it is the good that is loveable without qualification, while what is good for each is what is loveable to each; but each loves not what is good for him but what seems to him to be so. But that will make no difference; for it will be what appears loveable. There being three things that cause people to love (*philein*), the word ‘friendship’ does not apply to the loving of inanimate objects; for there is no reciprocal loving, nor wishing for the other’s good (presumably wishing good things for one’s wine is absurd, or rather, if it does happen, one wishes for it to keep, so as to have it for oneself); and people say friendship demands that one wish a friend good things for his sake . . . If there is to be friendship, the parties must have good will towards each other, i.e. wish good things for each other, and be aware of the other’s doing so, the feeling being brought about by one of the three things mentioned. (*Nicomachean Ethics* VIII.2, 1155b17–1156a6)

It seems to us (Penner and Rowe) difficult not to read this passage, throughout, as an implicit response to the *Lysis* – from someone who (a) thinks that there are at least two distinct objects of ‘appetition’, (b) thinks that what human beings desire, and go for, is not what really is good (or pleasant) but what appears to us to be good (or pleasant), but also (c) is otherwise still using the same general approach that Socrates did, if in a much more roundabout and indirect way.

For what Aristotle *keeps* from an account like the *Lysis* is just as important as what he gives up. It is not just a question of terminology (the point about *phil-*words). It is rather that the *Lysis*, or the kind of approach that the *Lysis* represents, is still Aristotle’s *starting-point*. In particular, he retains the same view of what is ultimately good, and desirable (‘loveable’), i.e. good and desirable/loveable without qualification (and so also pleasant without qualification). The passage from *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII.2 just cited does not by itself make this clear, and indeed the question ‘[i]s it . . . the good that people love, or what is good for themselves?’ might well seem to announce a quite different view. But the following chapter is more specific. After talking at some length about friendships based on utility and pleasure, and

⁴³ Nevertheless, ‘utility-friendship’ survives as a separate category in Aristotle’s analysis (so that it is, after all, at least in part an empirical analysis: see above).

especially about how these do not involve loving people ‘for themselves’, Aristotle tells us that

it is the friendship between good people, those resembling each other in excellence, that is complete; for each alike of these wishes good things for the other insofar as he is good, and he is good in himself. And those who wish things for their friends, for their friends’ sake, are friends most of all; for they do so because of the friends themselves, and not incidentally. So friendship between these lasts so long as they are good, and excellence is something lasting. Again, each party is good without qualification, and is good for his friend; for the good are both good without qualification and of benefit to one another. They are similarly pleasant, too, for the good are both pleasant without qualification and pleasant for one another; for each type of person finds pleasure in his own actions and those like them, and the actions of the good are the same or similar. (*Nicomachean Ethics* VIII.3, 1156b7–17)

Thus ‘people of excellence’ are useful and pleasant for each other; but they *also* love each other, and feel good will for each other, just to the extent that the other is good without qualification, i.e. excellent. As Sarah Broadie comments, in this whole context of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle gives wishing someone good ‘for his own sake’ a wide and a narrow interpretation. In the wide one, operative [in VIII.2], the contrast is with wishing that something or someone be safe and sound simply in order that the thing or person serve some purpose of one’s own (1155b29–31).⁴⁴ The wide sense is a condition of each of the three types of friendship’ (sc. as based on excellence, utility and pleasure). The second interpretation of wishing someone good ‘for his own sake’ is by way of a contrast with ‘wishing goods for someone because of incidental facts about him’,⁴⁵ i.e. that he is useful or pleasant – that a person is excellent (or ‘virtuous’) is not a merely ‘incidental’ fact about him: *excellent* is what he *is*. Evidently there is not only room for our valuing excellence in another as we value it in ourselves, but that is the key feature of friendship based on excellence.

This is the general context for the modern claim that Aristotle achieves that (allegedly) crucial distance from, or advance on, the Plato of the *Lysis*: that is, because he allows room for our loving people *for themselves*, and not just for what we will get from them – or, to re-introduce Price’s language, for treating people as ends rather than as means (see §A above). Both wide

⁴⁴ 1155b29–31: ‘presumably wishing good things for one’s wine is absurd, or rather, if it does happen, one wishes for it to keep, so as to have it for oneself’.

⁴⁵ Broadie, in Broadie and Rowe 2002, *ad* 1155b28–9, 1156b7–11.

and narrow interpretations of wishing someone good ‘for his own sake’ seem to have this effect. However, if we do take Aristotle in this way, we should notice that it will not necessarily take us any further than a Socrates (the one in the *Lysis*) who sees wanting others to be happy, and so wanting them to be wise, as part of loving them, and sees loving others as contributing to one’s own happiness. (One difference – which does not affect the present point – will be that Aristotle’s ideal friends will delight in each others’ excellences as a whole: their wisdom, or *phronēsis*, but also their characters.) The only question, in the case of the *Lysis*, was how to square *this* way of thinking about loving with the more general claim that what we love is our own good – and a similar question arose in the context of the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*. But in fact it turns out to arise with hardly any less urgency in Aristotle. In *Nicomachean Ethics* ix.9, we find him explaining why even those who are self-sufficient need friends. Those who have all the appropriate external goods, and are already leading the supremely pleasant life (of excellence), nevertheless *do* need people like themselves, to spend their time with: why? Because – to put it very roughly – in that way they are better able to see themselves:

just as for each his own existence is desirable, so his friend’s is too, or to a similar degree. But as we saw, the good man’s existence *is* desirable because of his perceiving himself, that self being good; and such perceiving is pleasant in itself . . . For the blessed [i.e., happy] person, then, if his⁴⁶ existence is desirable in itself (being naturally good and pleasant) and so, to a similar extent, is the friend’s, the friend too will be something desirable . . . So: the person who is to be happy will need friends possessed of excellence. (*Nicomachean Ethics* ix.9, 1170b7–19)

Now there are ways of reading this part of Aristotle’s account that make it represent a kind of qualified altruism.⁴⁷ But its most immediate effect, surely, is to suggest that a thing’s being *good*, or *naturally good* (or ‘good without qualification’), is a matter of its being desirable to, and for, the good person – the ‘person of excellence’: that is, its being something he will want to acquire, for himself (and also, somehow derivatively, will value in others). If so, then that question in viii.2, ‘[i]s it . . . the good that people love, or what is good for themselves?’⁴⁸ is not, as an incautious reading might suppose, introducing a distinction between good for oneself

⁴⁶ The translation – Rowe’s – we are using (from Broadie and Rowe 2002) has ‘For the blessed person, then, if, then, his . . .’; the second ‘then’ and the surrounding commas need to be excised.

⁴⁷ Price 1997: ch. 4 (with ‘Afterword, §§5, 6) is the most brilliant example of such a reading known to us.

⁴⁸ 1155b21–2.

and good of some other sort, i.e. at least including good for others; nor, in the sequel to that question, is Aristotle in any way distancing himself from the idea of the good as what is good for the agent.⁴⁹ But no more is he in Books I or III (see above), or in other parts of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. That is, despite those fundamental divergences (two, not one, objects of ‘love’; ‘love’ directed towards the apparent rather than the real good), the direction of Aristotle’s inquiry into *philia* in that treatise is in an important way determined by the sorts of assumptions that also dominate the *Lysis*. Or, at any rate, that seems more than a live possibility; and our purpose here – fortunately – is only to outline a case, not to prove it. (Yet: why should all this be *problematical*, exactly? Why should it not just be true, as we – Penner and Rowe – claim that it is, that loving others, genuinely caring for them, is a crucial aspect of human happiness? This is a point that plainly impresses Aristotle at the end of *Nicomachean Ethics* IX, as much as it did the Plato who wrote the *Lysis*. And whether his explanation of this aspect of human existence does much to help us fill any gaps left by the *Lysis* seems to us to be open to doubt: that is, we feel no more inclined than before to read Aristotle back into the *Lysis*.)

The *Eudemian Ethics* makes clear from the beginning what kind of good it is talking about:

There is also a question as to whether what is loved (*to philoumenon*) is the pleasant or the good.⁵⁰ For if we love (*philein*) what we desire (*epithumein*) – and passionate love (*erōs*) is most like that (for ‘none’, to quote the poet, ‘lover is unless he love for aye’ – and desire is for the pleasant,⁵¹ on this showing what is loved is the pleasant; whereas if we love what we wish for, it is the good; but the pleasant and the good are different things.

We must therefore attempt to decide about these matters and others akin to them, taking as a starting-point the following. The thing desired (*orekton*)⁵² and wished for (*boulēton*) is either the good or the apparent good. Therefore also the pleasant is desired (*orekton*), for it is an apparent good; for some think it so, while to others it appears good even if they do not think it so (for appearance and

⁴⁹ ‘The good’ for Aristotle is evidently distinguished from ‘the useful’, as Socrates’ ‘first friend’ in the *Lysis* is distinguished from (so-called) ‘friends for the sake of a friend’: it is one of the things loveable ‘as ends’ (*Nicomachean Ethics* VIII.2, 1155b20–1), the other being the pleasant, which merely appears good.

⁵⁰ This is added to the list of ‘questions’ (*aporiai*: VII.1, 1235a5–39) as a kind of afterthought, but it is an important question – just how can two such different things *both* be the object of ‘love’? Answer: because what we love is the apparent good . . .

⁵¹ That *epithumia* is for the pleasant, *boulēsis* for the good is a kind of Aristotelian *topos*: see e.g. *Eudemian Ethics* II.7, *Nicomachean Ethics* III.2.

⁵² The noun *orexis* is probably Aristotle’s most general term for ‘appetition’.

judgement are not in the same part of the soul). Yet it is clear that both the good and the pleasant are friend (*philon*).

This being decided, we must make another assumption. Things good are some of them good without qualification, others good for someone but not good without qualification; and the same things are good without qualification and pleasant without qualification. For things advantageous (*sumpheronta*) for a body that is in a healthy condition we pronounce good for the body without qualification, but things good for a sick body not – for example doses of medicine and surgical operations; and likewise also the things pleasant for a body that is in a healthy and sound condition we pronounce as pleasant for the body without qualification . . .

Since therefore good is said in more than one way, for we call one thing good by virtue of its being of a certain sort, another by virtue of the fact that it is serviceable (*ōphelimon*) and useful (*chrēsimon*), and furthermore the pleasant is *both* what is pleasant without qualification and good without qualification, *and* what is pleasant for somebody and apparently good – as in the case of inanimate objects we may choose a thing and love (*philein*) it because of each of these things, so also in the case of a human being: one we love because he is of a certain sort and because of excellence, another because he is serviceable and useful, another because he is pleasant and because of pleasure. And someone becomes a friend (*philos*) when while being loved (*philoumenos*) he loves in return, and the fact in one way or another (*pōs*) does not escape them. (*Eudemian Ethics* VII.2, 1235b13–1236a15; tr. Rackham, modified)

Particularly interesting is the direct comparison between loving people and loving *things* (a comparison rejected by the *Nicomachean* version, though at a later stage in the analysis: clearly, we only wish people well, not things).⁵³ For Aristotle, one suspects, there will only be a limited range of objects that are good, desirable, without qualification; a range limited, in fact, to the excellences ('virtues') themselves, which will be good for us in the perfectly straightforward sense of contributing to our happiness. So too, somehow (Aristotle's argument seems to propose), will the same qualities in others. The parallel with things that are unqualifiedly good for our body is direct, and exact: the excellences, and the activities connected with them, contribute to our happiness in the same way that healthy things, and doing healthy things, contribute to our health.

This discussion of Aristotle might be extended further: that is, we think it would be profitable to discuss still other aspects of his treatments of *philia* in terms of a response to, or perhaps better dialogue with, the *Lysis* – or, again, as descendants of the *Lysis*. One such aspect would be his

⁵³ VIII.2, 1155b29–31 (see above).

differing treatments of the relationship between the three kinds of friendship (*Nicomachean Ethics* VIII.4, 1157b1–5, with VIII.1, 1155b13–16; *Eudemian Ethics* VII.2, 1236a16–33).⁵⁴ That, however, would be considerably beyond our brief. The brief we set ourselves was to suggest – and to sketch a sufficient case for suggesting – that it is truer to say that we need the *Lysis* to understand Aristotle than that we need Aristotle to understand the *Lysis*; and that task, we hope, is now complete.

(D) BEYOND ARISTOTLE

We claim, nevertheless, that Aristotle himself understood the *Lysis* rather well. He responds to it *dialectically*, i.e. by entering into a kind of conversation with it – again, whether directly or at one or more removes. But that, in any case, is how he typically responds to Plato; he reads Plato's texts as contributions to a continuing discussion, retaining what he finds useful, discarding, modifying and substituting as he sees fit. This way Aristotle has of reading Plato is probably the main reason why he so rarely mentions his teacher by name: rather than identifying Plato with a body of doctrines, he sees him as a source of ideas and arguments to be picked up and engaged with. Or so, at any rate, with the *Lysis*;⁵⁵ there is no similarly close engagement with the *Symposium* or the *Phaedrus* – which tends to fit with our suggestion that the *Lysis* became something of a school text in the Academy. This is a role for which its relative philosophical density, especially, would seem to make it well adapted.⁵⁶

After Aristotle, we have little or no evidence of any close interest in, or reading of, the *Lysis* inside the Academy (that is, in terms of its products

⁵⁴ See e.g. (*EE*) 1236a25–30: ‘. . . in the case of friendship, they cannot take account of all the observed facts. For as one definition does not fit, they think that the other kinds of friendship are not friendships at all; but really they are, although not in the same way. But when they find that the primary friendship (*hē prōtē*) does not fit, assuming that it would be universal if it really were primary, they say that the others are not friendships at all. But in reality there are many kinds of friendships . . .’ Something like this, if not quite this, is to be found in the passage on the ‘first friend’ in the *Lysis* (219B–220B); and it will, we propose, be less than extravagant to claim that the unnamed ‘they’ (a25, 28) stand in some sort of relationship to the Socrates of that passage.

⁵⁵ For a parallel case, see *Politics* I–III, large parts of which (especially in Book I) seem to be written with the *Statesman* in mind.

⁵⁶ Neither *Symposium* nor *Phaedrus* claims, of course, to be about *philia*, so that (one might say) the relative lack of reference to them in *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII–IX and *Eudemian Ethics* VII is perhaps not so surprising. On the other hand both dialogues do offer a psychology of action, as also do the two Aristotelian treatments of friendship; that it is the *Lysis* rather than they that – somehow or other – forms the starting-point for Aristotle's discussions is at any rate something that calls for explanation; especially, one might add *ad hominem*, if *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* are, as they are claimed to be (e.g. by Price: see above), already moving in the direction that Aristotle himself wants to go.

in this period – though about these, it must be said, our knowledge is at best patchy). Our evidence about the immediately post-Platonic Academy may suggest a growing tendency to dogmatize, and to treat Plato as a source of doctrine rather than of material for discussion. The dialectical habit did not die; it was at any rate strong enough to spawn the New Academy, and a variety of scepticism.⁵⁷ But dialectic that leads to any kind of scepticism is not the dialectic of the *Lysis*, nor indeed the dialectic of Aristotle. (That is, neither the Socrates of the *Lysis* nor Aristotle shows even the slightest tendency towards scepticism; dialectic is for the first *the way to the truth*, for the second a part of what will lead us there.) Nor did Socratic intellectualism disappear without trace. The Stoics, in particular, developed a psychology and an ethical system that – self-consciously – owed much to Socrates, and indeed to the reading of *Plato* (however much the Stoics officially distanced themselves from him). However the precise nature of the relationship between Stoicism and Socratic intellectualism still remains, for the most part, to be properly understood: in recent times, curiously, Stoicism has probably received more, or at any rate more sympathetic treatment, than its ancestor.⁵⁸

In general, the modern world claims to have moved on from where ‘old man Socrates’ was, as the ancient world itself moved on, in different ways and for different reasons. There is no evidence that the *Lysis* itself was forgotten, or lost;⁵⁹ it seems that there was just no longer the same

⁵⁷ ‘Spawn’ is perhaps too strong a term; the sceptical Academy could be represented, by Platonists, just as a (mistaken) interpretation of Plato: cf. e.g. Bonazzi 2003: ch. 2, §6. (Bonazzi cites the sixth-century CE anonymous *Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*, 10, 16–20, where the author rejects the argument that the way e.g. the *Lysis* ‘sets up opposite theses’ supports the treatment of Plato as a sceptic. No, says Anon.: even if Plato does set up opposite theses, he ends up establishing the truth – not necessarily in the same dialogue. Cf. also Proclus as cited by Tempesta 1997: 227.) But it is at any rate hard to suppose it to be mere accident that both Aristotle and the sceptics Arcesilaus and Carneades all belonged to that institution called the ‘Academy’: different though Arcesilaus’ and Carneades’ take on, and use of, ‘dialectic’ (and indeed their take on and use of Plato’s texts) may have been from Aristotle’s, it is recognizably, at bottom, the same kind of activity – and self-consciously so, to the extent that neither side makes any secret of its relationship to Plato. Cf. Long 1986: 440–1, 1988: 159.

⁵⁸ A start is made in an important article by A. A. Long (Long 1988), which compares aspects of early Stoic ethical theory with *Euthydemus* 278E3–281E5. (See also Striker 1994.) But it would be interesting to see how the Stoic theory compared to a more complete account of (what we have called) its Socratic counterpart. There are, for example, clear connections between the Stoic and Socratic accounts of *desire* and its object; between the Stoic notion of *oikeiōsis* (on which see most recently Algra 2003) and the kind of extension of the notion of ‘what belongs’ (*to oikeion*) that we find in the *Lysis* (and elsewhere in Plato); between what the Stoics say about the final good, and about pleasure, and the notion of the ‘first friend’; and so on.

⁵⁹ Thus the Epicurean Colotes, somewhere in the middle of the third century BCE, wrote a work entitled *Against the Lysis*, of which we have some fragmentary remains. Colotes is evidently attacking Socrates as a way of attacking the Academic sceptics; the fragments that we have do not suggest that

appetite for the kind of minute, careful reading of it that it was second nature for Aristotle, and no doubt for others in the Academy, to accord to it.⁶⁰ Scholars and philosophers in the modern period – which means, in terms of Platonic studies, from the beginning of the nineteenth century – have re-established the same habit of careful reading, but as it were from the outside. Plato is not one of *us*, one of our own, in the way that he was, for Aristotle, one of *his* own – or if he is one of us, he is so, as it were, by special licence, because he is conceded to be some sort of philosopher. The consequence is that often we modern readers have not been prepared to trust Plato enough: to trust him, as Aristotle does,⁶¹ at least long enough to see where his thinking leads, and to give the outcomes a decent hearing.⁶² (Those ‘modern readers’, as Part I of this book will have demonstrated, up to a point include even Penner and Rowe: it has frequently been a fight for us, over the past three years, to avoid giving up on Plato, and just having to admit that he has – simply – got it wrong. In the end, however, we claim that if he ever does get it wrong, there is no *simply* about it.) We hope, in the book as a whole, to have done both things, in relation to the *Lysis*:

he was greatly interested in the dialogue, and its argument, for themselves. (For bibliography on Colotes’ work, see Warren 2002: 334 n. 4.) A useful list of later texts which cite or otherwise use the *Lysis* is contained in Tempesta 1997: ch. 6.5.

⁶⁰ Thus, for example, even the brilliant Plotinus seems to show little actual engagement with the argument of the dialogue – and this despite what was evidently a close knowledge of it, as of other shorter Platonic dialogues: see Taormina 2001 (a knowledge, moreover, as Taormina rightly stresses, that he clearly expected his readers to share). Plotinus, like many modern readers, read the *Lysis* – because it was Plato’s – but perhaps without the degree of sympathy for its overall project that is required fully to appreciate its outcomes. That sort of lack of sympathy, we (Penner and Rowe) conjecture, *pace* Tempesta 1997: 227, was at least as important a factor in ‘la . . . scarsa fortuna’ of the *Lysis* as any linguistic or interpretative difficulties it may contain; unless of course the presence of (at least partly) unexpected, unfamiliar, even unexpected ideas is to count as an ‘interpretative difficulty’.

⁶¹ One thing in particular we suppose Aristotle to have got right, in a way that many ancients like many moderns did not: that the supposed *aporia* at the end of the *Lysis* is merely manufactured. Even those Platonists like Proclus – see n. 57 above – who rejected the sceptical interpretation of the *Lysis* (and other dialogues like it) could still regard it as a kind of limbering up, with the real event left for later: the *Symposium*, Aristotle . . .

⁶² It is something of an irony, then, that Aristotle’s own discussions should be thought to have made the *Lysis* redundant (see above, and for the claim that the ancients took the same line, Bordt 1998, and Tempesta 1997: 228). True, even on the Penner–Rowe account of the *Lysis* there is a discussion, a dialogue, that begins with the *Lysis* and reaches some kind of culmination in Aristotle. But that discussion, as we claim, consists in large part in a confrontation between *two radically different perspectives*: the Socratic/Platonic perspective, and the Aristotelian. And the case we, Penner and Rowe, hope to have put as persuasively as possible is that the Socratic/Platonic perspective, as illustrated most fully in the *Lysis* (more fully, at any rate, than in either *Symposium* or *Phaedrus*), is at least as deserving of our attention as its Aristotelian counterpart. In our view, indeed, it is the *truer* perspective.

both to have followed out Plato's (Socrates'?) thinking, and to have taken that thinking seriously.⁶³

⁶³ (One afterthought. In the book – see e.g. p. 249, n. 35 – we have taken up an attitude to what we frequently speak of as the 'near-interchangeability' of *erōs*, *philia* and *desire for the good*: namely that we should say, not what Plato in places says or implies in the *Lysis* and the *Symposium* (that desire for the good is *erōs*, or that *philia* is desire for the good), but rather that *philia* and *erōs* are *species* of desire for the good (allowing that desire for food, for example, might be another species of desire for the good). What we see as the main motive for saying this should be clear enough from p. 270. It has come to seem to us, however, that this may not supply good enough reason for the genus-species hypothesis as opposed to the hypothesis that *erōs*, *philia* and *epithumia* (desire) are *identical* – which is about the only claim we can find strongly supported by things Plato says or implies in the two dialogues in question. As we see it, the *psychological states* of *philia*, *erōs* and desire are identical, even though the usual associations of the three words '*philia*', '*erōs*' and '*epithumia*' are different. (The ideas involved here may throw some light on the apparently too intellectual-looking cast that Socrates, and almost always Plato, give to the emotions.) That said, we have left the genus-species hypothesis in the book, since there is no great harm in it. For, first, as an account of the *associations* of the three words in question (associations which most readers will feel very strongly in reading the *Lysis*) it *would* be correct, so that some may find it more comfortable to work with. Second, this hypothesis will be correct if we include in an account of the psychological states themselves the characteristic *ways in which they are expressed* (e.g., characteristically sexual in the case of *erōs*). The situation, as we see it, is exactly parallel to that of 'The Morning Star' and 'The Evening Star', and to the case of the Unity of Virtue (see p. 13, n. 2 above, and Penner Unpub A, which has now appeared in the internet journal of the International Plato Society, *Plato*, and is downloadable at <http://www.nd.edu/~plato/platosissue/Penner.pdf>). See also our treatment of wisdom as being, in context, identical with (practicable) happiness at pp. 275–8 above. Thus, if forced to choose, we would be inclined to adopt the identity hypothesis, which we think the more likely to be Socratic and Platonic, even if odder and more difficult to defend.)

Translation of the Lysis

203A1 I was on my way from the Academy straight to the Lyceum along the road that runs outside the wall, under the wall itself; but when I'd got to the small gate where the spring of Panops is, there I chanced on Hippothales son of Hieronymus and Ctesippus of the Paeania deme and other young lads **203A5** with them, all standing in a group. And when Hippothales caught sight of me coming towards them, he said 'Socrates! Where is it you're on your way to, and **203B1** where from?'

'From the Academy,' I said; 'I'm on my way straight to the Lyceum.'

'Come straight here to us,' he said. 'Won't you come over? It really will be worth your while.'

203B5 'Where do you mean,' I said, 'and who are the "us" you want me to come over to?'

'I mean here,' he said, showing me just over from the wall a kind of precinct with its door standing open; 'and the ones passing our time there are those of us here now and others as well – quite a lot of them, and beauties too.'

204A1 'So what is this place, and how do you pass your time?'

'It's a wrestling-school,' he said, 'one just recently built; we spend most of our time in discussions, and would gladly make you a part of them.'

'Fine,' I said, 'if you do that; but who's teaching there?'

204A5 'It's actually a friend of yours,' he said, 'and an admirer – Miccus.'

'Zeus!' I said; 'definitely no mean person; in fact a fair professional when it comes to wisdom.'

'So are you prepared to follow us,' he said, 'so you can see for yourself those who are there?'

204B1 'Before that I'd like to be told what I'll be going in *for*, and who the beauty is.'

'One of us thinks it's one person, Socrates,' he said, 'another another.'

'But who do *you* think it is, Hippothales? This is what you should tell me.'

204B5 At that question he blushed. And I said ‘Son of Hieronymus, Hippothales, *this* you don’t need to tell me – whether you’re in love with someone or not; for I know that you’re not only in love, but already pretty far along in your love. I am, myself, of mean ability, **204C1** indeed useless, in respect to everything else, but this much has been given me – I don’t know how – from god, the capacity to recognize quickly a lover and an object of love.’

When he heard me say this he blushed much more deeply still. At that Ctesippus said ‘So very charming of you to blush, Hippothales, **204C5** and to be coy about telling Socrates the name! But if he passes even a little time with you, he’ll be worn out by your saying it over and over again. At any rate, Socrates, he’s deafened *our* **204D1** ears by stuffing them with “Lysis”; and then again if he has a bit of a drink, there’s every chance we’ll wake up in the middle of the night too, thinking we’re hearing “Lysis”. And as terrible as the things are that he says in ordinary conversation, they are hardly terrible at all compared with the poems that he tries **204D5** to pour over our heads, and the bits of prose. And what’s more terrible than these is that he even *sings* to his beloved, in an extraordinary voice that *we* have to put up with listening to. Now you ask him the name, and he blushes!’

204E1 ‘And Lysis, it seems,’ I said, ‘is some young person; I’m guessing, because I didn’t recognize the name when I heard it.’

‘Right,’ he [Ctesippus] said, ‘people don’t mention his own name all that much; instead he’s still called by his patronymic because his father is so widely **204E5** known. Because I’m sure there’s little chance of your not knowing what the boy looks like; he’s good-looking enough to be known just from that alone.’

‘Please let me be told whose son he is,’ I said.

‘Democrats,’ he said, ‘from the deme of Aexone – Lysis is his eldest son.’

‘Well now,’ I said, ‘Hippothales, how noble and dashing **204E10** a love this is that you’ve discovered, from every point of view! So come on, give me just the displays **205A1** you give these people here, so that I can establish whether you know the things a lover should say about a beloved to him or to others.’

‘But do you attach weight, Socrates,’ he said, ‘to any of the things this person says?’

‘Are you denying,’ I said, ‘even that you’re in love with the one “this person” says?’

205A5 ‘No, I’m not,’ he [Hippothales] said, ‘but I do deny that I write poetry to my beloved, or put things in prose to him.’

'He's not well,' said Ctesippus; 'he's delirious, raving!'

And I said 'Hippothales, I'm not for a moment asking to hear **205BI** your *verses*, or any *song* you may have composed to the young lad; what I'm asking to hear is what your *thought* is, so that I can establish the way you're applying yourself to your beloved.'

'I'm sure *he'll* tell you,' he said; 'for he knows it in detail, **205B5** off by heart, if as he says he's deafened from hearing it from me.'

'Heavens above!' said Ctesippus; 'For sure I do. Because the things he says are ridiculous into the bargain, Socrates. He's a lover, with his mind fixed more than anyone else's on the boy, and yet he doesn't **205C1** have anything of his own to say that even – a *boy* couldn't say: is that ridiculous, or isn't it? But what the whole city celebrates, about Democrats, and Lysis, the boy's grandfather, and about all the boy's ancestors, things like wealth and racehorses and victories at the Pythian and **205C5** Isthmian and Nemean Games with the four-horse team and the single horse and rider – *that's* what he puts in the poems he recites, and stuff that's even older news than that. It was the reception given to Heracles that he was going through in some poem the day before yesterday – how because of their kinship with *Heracles* their ancestor **205D1** received *Heracles* as a visitor, the ancestor being himself descended from Zeus and the daughter of the founder of the deme; things old women sing about, and lots of other things of the same sort, Socrates. These are the things that this person talks and sings about, forcing us as well to be his audience.'

205D5 On hearing that, I said 'Ridiculous Hippothales, are you composing and singing an encomium to yourself before you've won?'

'But it's not to myself, Socrates,' he said, 'that I'm composing or singing.'

'You certainly don't *think* so,' I said.

205D10 'But how's that?' he said.

205E1 'It's to you most of all,' I said, 'that these songs of yours refer. For on the one hand, if you catch your beloved when he's as you describe him, what you've said and sung will be an ornament to *you*, and truly encomia, as if you were the victor, for having succeeded with a beloved like that; but on the other hand, if he escapes you, **205E5** the greater the encomia you've uttered about your beloved, so much the greater the beautiful and good things you'll seem to have been deprived of, **206A1** and ridiculous as a result. So the person who's an expert in erotics, my friend, doesn't praise the one he loves until he catches him, out of fear for how the future will turn out. And at the same time whenever anyone praises them and builds them up, the beautiful ones get full of proud and arrogant thoughts; or don't you think so?'

206A5 ‘I do,’ he said.

‘Well, the more arrogant they are, the more difficult they become to catch?’

‘Yes, that’s likely.’

‘So what sort of hunter would it be, in your view, that started up **206A10** his prey and made it more difficult to catch?’

206B1 ‘Clearly, a poor one.’

‘And what’s more, to use words and songs on a subject not to soothe it but to drive it wild would be a matter of a distinct lack of musical ability, wouldn’t it?’

‘It seems so to me.’

206B5 ‘Watch out then, Hippothales, that you don’t make yourself liable to all these things with your poetry-making. And furthermore, I myself think you wouldn’t wish to concede that a man who’s doing harm to himself with poetry is ever a good poet, in being harmful to himself.’

‘Zeus! No indeed,’ he said; ‘that would be quite senseless. But these **206C1** are just the reasons, Socrates, that I’m telling you everything: if you’ve something else up your sleeve, give your advice about the line a person should take in conversation, or what he should do, to become an object of love for a beloved.’

‘It’s not easy to say,’ I said. ‘But if you were prepared to get **206C5** him to come and exchange words with me, perhaps I’d be able to demonstrate to you what one should say in conversation with him instead of the things these people claim that you actually do say, and sing as well.’

‘Not difficult at all,’ he said. ‘For if you go in with Ctesippus here and sit down and have a conversation, my thinking is that he’ll **206C10** actually come over to you himself, because you see, Socrates, he’s got this outstanding love **206D1** of listening. And another thing is that it’s the Hermaea festival, so that the younger people and the boys are all mixed up together. So he’ll come over to you, and if he doesn’t, he knows Ctesippus well enough through Ctesippus’ cousin Menexenus, because in fact it’s Menexenus he goes around with more **206D5** than anybody else – so let’s have Ctesippus call him over in case he doesn’t come over himself after all.’

‘That’s what we should do,’ I said. And as I said it, I took **206E1** Ctesippus and made my approach, into the wrestling-school; the others came behind us.

When we got in, what we found there was that the boys had made their sacrifice and the business surrounding the sacred rituals was pretty well already done with, **206E5** so that everyone was playing knucklebones, all

dressed up as they were. Well, most of them were playing outside in the courtyard, but a few were playing odds and evens in a corner of the stripping-off room with a large quantity of knucklebones that they were selecting out of some little baskets; others were standing around and forming an audience. Now one of these was actually Lysis, who was standing there among 207A1 the boys and the younger people with a garland on his head and standing out by his looks – worth talking about not just for his beauty but for his beauty-and-goodness. For our part, we went off and sat down opposite the group – it was quiet there – and conversed 207A5 a bit among ourselves. Well, Lysis kept turning round to look at us, and it was clear that he wanted to come over to us. So then for a time he was at a loss about what to do, hesitating to come over to us on his own, but at that point Menexenus 207B1 came in from the courtyard in the middle of his game, and when he saw me and Ctesippus, came to sit beside us; and so when Lysis saw him he followed and sat down beside us together with Menexenus. Then others came over too, and Hippothales took his opportunity, 207B5 since he could see several people placing themselves close to, to use them as a cover and take a close position himself in such a way that he thought Lysis wouldn't catch sight of him, because he was afraid of annoying him; and positioned like this he set to listening.

As for me, I looked at Menexenus, and said ‘Son of Demophon, 207C1 which of the two of you is the older?’

‘We have different views about that,’ he said.

‘Then you’ll also dispute about which of you is the better born,’ I said.

‘Yes, absolutely,’ he said.

207C5 ‘And about which of you is the more *beautiful*, too, in the same way.’

They both laughed at that.

‘I shan’t ask you, though,’ I said, ‘which of you is the richer; after all, the two of you are friends, aren’t you?’

‘Yes, absolutely,’ they said together.

207C10 ‘Well, what friends have is said to be in common between them, so that on *this* subject you won’t quarrel at all – at least if you’re telling the truth about your friendship.’

They agreed.

207D1 I was setting about asking them, after that, which of the two of them was juster and wiser. Then, as I was in the middle of doing this, someone came up and got Menexenus to go off with him, because – he said – the trainer was calling for him; I got the impression he was in the middle of sacrificing.

So Menexenus went off, **207D5** while I put a question to Lysis: 'I suppose, Lysis,' I said, 'that your father, and your mother, love you very much?'

'Yes, certainly.'

'Well then, they would want you to be as happy as possible?'

207E1 'Obviously.'

'And does it seem to you that a person is happy if he's a slave, and in the sort of position that prevented him from doing any one of the things he desired?'

'Zeus, no, it doesn't seem so to me,' he said.

'Well then, if your father, and your mother, love you, and desire you to become happy, clearly **207E5** they are enthusiastic in every way that you should *be* happy.'

'Obviously,' he said.

'In that case do they allow you to do what you wish, and do they not tell you off at all, or prevent you from doing the things you desire, whatever they may be?'

'Zeus! Yes, they certainly do, Socrates; they stop me doing a whole lot of things!'

'What do you mean?' I said. 'They wish you to be **208A1** blessed, and they prevent you from doing what you wish, whatever that may be? I mean, tell me this: if you ever conceive a desire to ride on one of your father's chariots, taking the reins when there's a race on, they wouldn't let you do it, but would prevent you?'

'Zeus! They certainly wouldn't let me,' he said.

208A5 'Who *would* they let do it, then?'

'There's a driver who gets a wage from my father.'

'What do you mean? They hand it over to a wage-earner more than to you to do whatever he wishes about the horses, and on top of *that* **208B1** they actually pay him money?'

'Well of course,' he said.

'But I imagine they hand it over to you to control the mule-pair, and if you wanted to take the whip and hit them, they'd let you.'

'Why ever would they let me?' he said.

'What then,' I said, 'is no one permitted **208B5** to hit them?'

'Very much so,' he said; 'the muleteer.'

'And he's a slave, or a free person?'

'A slave,' he said.

'Even a slave, it seems, they think more of than you, their son, and they hand their personal possessions over to him more than to you, and they allow him to do what he wishes, whereas you **208C1** they prevent? And tell

me this further thing. Do they allow you, yourself, to control yourself, or don't they even hand this over to you?'

'What an ideal!' he said.

'Is there someone who controls you?'

'This person here, a guardian,' he said.

'Surely not a slave?'

'What else would he be? But he does belong to *us*,' he said.

208c5 'What a terrible thing,' I said '– a free person being controlled by a slave! But what does this guardian do when he's controlling you?'

'He takes me to the teacher's,' he said; 'what else?'

'Surely *they* don't control you as well, your **208d1** teachers?'

'Of course they do!'

'There's a whole collection of masters and controllers, then, that your father deliberately sets over you. But what about when you go home to your mother: in order to make you happy, does *she* let you do whatever you wish, whether with the wool or **208d5** the loom, when she's weaving? I don't for a moment suppose she prevents you from touching the blade or the shuttle or any of the other wool-working tools.'

He laughed, and said 'Zeus! **208e1** Socrates, it isn't just that she prevents me, I'd get hit if I touched them.'

'Heracles!' I said. 'Surely you haven't done some injustice to your father or your mother?'

'Zeus! I haven't, for sure,' he said.

'Well, what *is* it in return for which they so terribly prevent you from being **208e5** happy and doing whatever you wish, bringing you up from beginning to end of each day in a state of slavery to someone, and in a word doing practically none of the things you desire? The result, it appears, is that *you* don't get any benefit from the money, when there's so much of it – everyone **209a1** has more control over it than you do; neither do you get any benefit out of that body of yours, for all its nobility, but this too someone else looks after as if it were some sheep. *You* control nothing, Lysis, and you don't do a single one of the things you desire.'

'That's because I'm not yet grown up, Socrates,' he said.

'I suspect it isn't **209a5** that that's stopping you, son of Democrates, since so far as that goes, I imagine, both your father and your mother actually do hand things over to you and don't wait till you're grown up. When they wish things to be read to them or written down for them, I imagine you're **209b1** the first person in the household they assign to the task. Isn't that so?'

'Yes, it certainly is,' he said.

'Well then, here you are permitted to write whichever letter of the alphabet you wish to write first, and whichever second; and you have the same licence when it comes to reading. And when you take up **209B5** the lyre, I imagine, neither your father nor your mother prevents you from tightening or loosening whichever string you wish, or from plucking with your fingers or striking with the plectrum. Or do they?'

'Certainly not.'

'What on earth, then, Lysis, would the reason be that in these cases **209C1** they don't prevent you, whereas in the cases we were talking about just now, they do stop you?'

'I imagine,' he said, 'that it's because these are things I know, whereas the others I don't.'

'Very good,' I said; 'well done! In that case your father isn't waiting till you're grown up to hand everything over to you, but on that very day that he considers you **209C5** to be thinking better than himself, he'll hand over both himself and his possessions to you.'

'That's what I think,' he said.

'Very good,' I said. 'What about the neighbour? Won't he use the same rule for judging you as your father will? **209D1** Do you think he'll hand over the running of his estate to you, at such time as he considers you to be thinking better about estate-management than himself, or will he – do you think – preside over it himself?'

'I think he'll hand it over to me.'

'What about the Athenians? Do you think they won't hand over their affairs to you, at such time as **209D5** they see that you're thinking sufficiently well?'

'I think they will.'

'Zeus!' I said; 'in that case, what about the Great King? Would he hand things over more to his eldest son, destined to control all Asia, to throw in whatever he wished to throw into the sauce **209E1** when the meat was boiling, or to us, if we arrived at his court and showed him that *we* were thinking finer thoughts about the preparation of cooked food than his own son?'

'To us, clearly,' he said.

'And *him* he wouldn't let throw in even the smallest amount, whereas **209E5** us, even if we wished to take whole handfuls of salt, he'd let us throw them in.'

'Obviously.'

'What then if his son had something wrong with his eyes: would he let him touch his own **210A1** eyes, if he didn't consider him an expert in medicine, or would he stop him?'

'He'd stop him.'

'But if he thought *we* were experts in medicine, if we wanted to open up the son's eyes and sprinkle them with a dose of ashes, even then I don't think he'd stop us, because he'd consider us to be thinking correctly.'

210A5 'What you say is true.'

'Then is it the case that he would also hand over everything else to us more than to himself and his son, that is, anything else about which we appear to him wiser than the two of them?'

'Necessarily so, Socrates,' he said.

'This is how it is, then,' I said, 'my friend Lysis: with respect to the things **210B1** about which we become good thinkers, everyone will hand them over to us, whether Greeks or non-Greeks, men or women, and we shall do in these cases whatever we wish, and no one will deliberately stand in our way, but we shall be at the same time free ourselves, in the cases in question, and **210B5** controllers of others, and these will be *our* things, because we shall benefit from them; with respect to the things about which we do not acquire intelligence, on the other hand, neither will anyone hand it over to us to do in relation to *them* what appears to us to be the thing to do, but everyone **210C1** will stand in our way to whatever extent they can, not only people not belonging to us, but our father and our mother, and anything else that may belong more closely to us than these, and we ourselves in such cases shall be subject to others, and the things in question will not belong to us, because we shall derive no benefit from them. Do you agree **210C5** that this is how it is?'

'I agree.'

'Will we then be objects of love to anyone, and will anyone love us, in those things, whatever they are, in which we are of no benefit?'

'Certainly not.'

'If *that's* so, then neither does your father love you; nor does any other person love anyone else, to whatever extent that someone else is useless.'

'It doesn't appear so,' **210D1** he said.

'In that case, my boy, if you become wise, everyone will be friends to you and everyone will belong to you, for you will be useful and good, but if you don't, neither anyone else nor your father will be friend to you, nor your mother nor those belonging to you. Now is it possible in these circumstances, Lysis, **210D5** to think big thoughts – in the case of things one isn't yet thinking in at all?'

'How could it be?' he said.

'But then, if *you're* in need of a teacher, *you* aren't yet thinking.'

'True.'

'Neither, then, is there anything big about your thoughts, if in fact you're still thoughtless.'

'Zeus!' he said; 'Socrates, it doesn't seem to me that there is.'

210E1 When I heard his answer, I glanced at Hippothales, and almost slipped up; what came into my head was to say 'That, Hippothales, is how one *should* converse with one's beloved, humbling him and cutting him down to size, not puffing him up, as you are doing, and praising him to pieces.'

210E5 Well, when I saw him struggling with himself and thrown into confusion by what was being said, I remembered that he had even placed himself so as to avoid Lysis' noticing him, so I managed to catch myself and **211A1** bite my tongue. In the meantime, Menexenus had come back and was sitting himself down in the place he'd got up from. At which point Lysis, in a very playful and friendly fashion, and without Menexenus noticing, said to me in a quiet voice 'Socrates, what you're saying **211A5** to me – say it to Menexenus as well!'

To which I said 'That *you'll* tell him, Lysis, because you were paying complete attention.'

'Yes, absolutely,' he said.

'Try, then,' I said, 'to recall it as far as **211B1** you can, so that you can report everything clearly to him; and if you forget anything, ask me again when you come across me next.'

'I'll do that, Socrates,' he said; 'very much so, you can be sure of it. But say something else to him, so that I too can hear it, **211B5** until it's time for us to leave for home.'

'This I must do,' I said, 'seeing that you're telling me to, as well. But make sure you come to my assistance, in case Menexenus tries to refute me; or don't you know he's a great one for disputing?'

'Zeus, yes,' he said, 'very much so; that's exactly why I want **211C1** you to have a conversation with him.'

'So I can make myself ridiculous?'

'Zeus, no,' he said; 'so you can give him some punishment.'

'How's that going to happen?' I said. 'It won't be easy; he's a clever one – **211C5** a pupil of Ctesippus'. And I tell you, he's here, the man himself, Ctesippus: don't you see him?'

'Don't worry about a thing, Socrates,' he said; 'just go on and have a conversation with him.'

'A conversation is what I must have,' I said.

211C10 As we were saying these things to each other, Ctesippus said 'Why are you having a private party, the two of you, and not sharing **211D1** what you're saying with us?'

'Of course we must share with you,' I said. 'There's a part of what I'm saying which this person here doesn't understand, and claims to think Menexenus knows about; so he's telling me to ask him.'

211D5 'So why not ask him?' he said.

'Indeed I *shall* ask him,' I said. 'So tell me, Menexenus, whatever I ask you. Since I was a boy I've actually always had a desire for a certain kind of possession, like everyone else, only it's different things for different people: one person has a desire **211E1** to get horses, while for another it's dogs, for another, gold, for another, public honours; but as for me, I don't get excited about these things – what I'm absolutely passionate about is getting friends, and I'd wish for a good friend more than for the best example any man has of a quail or **211E5** a cock, and – Zeus! – I'd wish, myself, more for that than for the best horse and dog; and I do believe – I swear by the Dog! – more than the gold of Darius I'd much sooner get me a friend, or rather, more than getting Darius himself; that's how much of a friend-lover I am. So **212A1** when I see the two of you, you and Lysis, I'm overcome, and call you happy because at such a young age you're able to acquire this possession quickly and easily – you've acquired him as a friend like this, quickly and firmly, and similarly he's acquired you; whereas, as for me, I'm so far away from **212A5** having the possession that I don't even know in what way one person becomes a friend of another. But these are the very things I want to ask you about, because you're experienced in them. So tell me: when someone loves a person, which of the two is it that **212B1** becomes a friend – the one who loves, of the one who is loved? Or the one who is loved of the one who loves? Or does it make no difference?'

'It seems to me,' he said, 'that it makes no difference.'

'What do you mean?' I said. 'Do both, then, become friends of each other, if just one of them loves the **212B5** other?'

'It seems so to me,' he said.

'What about this: isn't it possible for someone who loves not to be loved in return by this person that he loves?'

'It is.'

'And what about this: is it possible even to be hated when one loves? The sort of thing, I imagine, that lovers too sometimes think they experience from their darlings: they love **212C1** as much as anyone could, but some of them think that they're not loved in return, while others think they're even hated. Or doesn't this seem true to you?'

'Yes,' he said, 'very true.'

'Well then, in such a case,' I said, 'one person loves and the other is loved.'

'Yes.'

'Which of the two of them, **212C5** then, is a friend of which? The one who loves of the one who is loved, whether he is also loved in return or is even hated, or the one who is loved of the one who is loved? Or again is *neither* of them, in such a case, a friend of *neither*, unless both of them love each other?'

'It appears, at any rate, **212D1** to be like that.'

'In that case it seems differently to us now from the way it seemed before. For then, if one of the two loved, it seemed to us that both were friends; but now, unless both love, neither is a friend.'

'Possibly,' he said.

'In that case nothing is friend to the one loving unless **212D5** it loves in return.'

'It appears not.'

'In that case, there aren't horse-lovers either, when the horses don't love them back, or quail-lovers, or for that matter dog-lovers and wine-lovers and exercise-lovers and wisdom-lovers – unless wisdom loves them in return. Or *does* each of these types love **212E1** the things in question, but without the things being friends, so that the poet lied when he said "Happy the man who has friends: children and solid-hoofed horses, hounds for the hunt, and a host abroad"?'

212E5 'It doesn't seem so to me,' he said.

'He seems to you to be saying the truth?'

'Yes.'

'What's loved, in that case, *is* a friend to the one loving, it appears, Menexenus, whether it loves him or, even, hates him; as for example with recently born children, in some respects not yet loving, in **213A1** others even hating, when they are disciplined by their mother or by their father – nevertheless even when hating, at that moment they are most of all dearest of friends to their parents.'

'It seems to me it's like that,' he said.

'It's not, then, the one loving that's a friend, from this argument, **213A5** but the one loved.'

'It appears so.'

'And it's the one hated, too, then, that's an enemy, not the one hating.'

'Evidently.'

'Many, then, are loved by their enemies, and hated by their friends, and are **213B1** friends to their enemies and enemies to their friends, if it's what's loved that's a friend and not what loves. And yet it's highly unreasonable, my dear friend, or rather, I think, it's actually impossible, to be enemy to friend and friend to enemy.'

'You appear, Socrates,' **213B5** he said, 'to be saying the truth.'

'Well then, if this is impossible, what loves will be friend of what's loved.'
 'Evidently.'

'What hates, then, conversely, will be enemy of what's hated.'

'Necessarily.'

'Well then, it's going to turn out that we'll have necessarily to agree to the same **213C1** things as we did in the previous cases, that often a friend is friend of a non-friend, and often even of an enemy, that is, when either a person loves something that doesn't love him or he loves something that even hates him; and that often enemy is enemy of non-enemy or even of friend, that is, when either a person loves something that doesn't hate him or hates something that even loves him.'

213C5 'Possibly,' he said.

'So what are we going to do,' I said, 'if neither those who love are going to be friends, nor the ones who are loved, nor those who love and are loved? Shall we say that besides these, there are still others of some sort that become friends to each other?'

'I don't – Zeus!' he said: 'Socrates, I don't see any way out at all.'

213D1 'Is it perhaps, Menexenus,' I said, 'that we weren't inquiring in the right way at all?'

'I think so, Socrates,' said Lysis, and blushed as he said it; for it seemed to me that the words escaped without his wanting them to, because of the intensity with which he was paying attention **213D5** to what was being said, and it was clear that it was the same, too, all the while he was listening.

So, because I wished to give Menexenus a breather, and also felt delight at the other's love for wisdom, I changed things round, turning the discussion **213E1** in Lysis' direction. I said:

'Lysis, what you're saying seems true to me, that if we were investigating in the right way, we'd never be lost in the way we are now. But let's not go along this way any longer – for the investigation appears to me one of a difficult sort, like a difficult road – but **213E5** where we made the turning, that's where it seems to me we should go, investigating the things **214A1** the poets tell us; for these we regard as being as it were fathers of wisdom, and leaders. And they do have something to say about who really are friends, and the view they express isn't, I imagine, a bad one; but they do claim that it's god himself that makes them friends, by bringing them to each other. **214A5** They put it, I think, something like this: "Ever god brings like to like," **214B1** and makes him known – or have you not encountered these verses?'

'Yes, I have,' [Lysis] said.

'So haven't you also encountered the prose-writings of the wisest people saying these very same things, that like is necessarily always friend to like? These people, I think, are the ones who **214B5** converse and write about the nature of the universe.'

'What you say is true,' Lysis said.

'Well then,' I said, 'is what they say right?'

'Perhaps,' he said.

'Perhaps half of it,' I said, 'and perhaps the whole of it, but we're just not understanding. For it seems to us that at any rate so far as one bad person **214C1** and another bad person are concerned, the nearer the first approaches the second and the more he associates with him, the more of an enemy he becomes to him, since he treats him unjustly, and it's impossible, I imagine, for people who do injustice and people to whom they do it to be friends. Isn't that so?'

'Yes,' he said.

'If we looked at it this way, then, half of what is being claimed wouldn't **214C5** be true; that is, if the bad are like one another.'

'What you say is true.'

'But it seems to me that what they are saying is that the *good* are like each other, and friends, whereas the bad, by contrast, as is actually said about them, are never alike, even themselves to themselves, but **214D1** are fickle and unstable; and if anything were to be itself unlike itself, and different from itself, that thing would hardly be likely to become like or friends to anything else. Doesn't it seem like this to you too?'

'It does to me,' he said.

'This, then, is what they're saying in their riddling way, or so it seems to me, my friend – those who say **214D5** that like is friend to like: that the good person alone is friend to the good person alone, while the bad person never enters into true friendship either to good or to bad. Does it seem the same to you?'

He nodded assent.

'In that case we already have in our hands the answer to the question who those that are friends are; for the argument indicates **214E1** to us that it's whoever are good.'

'Yes, it absolutely seems so,' he said.

'And to me,' I said. 'And yet there's something in it that leaves me unhappy. So come on, by Zeus! Let's have a look at what it is that I'm suspicious about. Is the like person friend to the like to the extent that he is like him, and is such a person **214E5** useful to another such? Or rather, put it like this: what benefit would anything whatever that's like anything else

whatever be capable of having for that other thing, or what harm could it do it, that it couldn't also have for itself or do to itself? Or what could it be subjected to that it couldn't also be **215A1** subjected to by itself? Things like that – how would they be prized by each other, when there's no aid they have to give each other? Is there any way they could be?"

'There isn't.'

'And whatever wasn't prized, how would it be a friend?'

'There's no way it would be.'

'But in that case the like person isn't friend to his like; but the good to the good, **215A5** to the extent that he's good and not to the extent that he's like, could he be a friend?'

'Perhaps.'

'But what about this: wouldn't the good person, to the extent that he's good, to that extent be sufficient for himself?'

'Yes.'

'But the one who's sufficient wouldn't be needing anything, with respect to his sufficiency.'

'No question about it.'

'But the sort of person who doesn't **215B1** need a thing wouldn't prize a thing either.'

'No, he wouldn't.'

'And what he didn't prize, he wouldn't love either.'

'Certainly not.'

'But if someone doesn't love, he isn't a friend.'

'It doesn't appear so.'

'How then on our account will the good be friends to the good at all, if they're not going to miss each other **215B5** when they're away from each other (since they're sufficient for themselves even when they're apart), and they're also going to have no need for each other when they are both there? People in that sort of situation – what's going to bring it about that they make much of each other?'

'Nothing,' he said.

'But **215C1** they wouldn't be friends if they didn't make much of each other.'

'True.'

'Just look and see, Lysis, how we are being led astray! Is it even that there's a way we're being deceived *completely*?'

'How so?' he said.

'There was a time once when I heard someone **215C5** saying – and I'm just now recalling it – that as for like in relation to like, and the good in relation

to the good, they were supremely hostile to each other; and moreover he called in Hesiod as witness, saying that in fact “Potter is angry with potter, and singer with singer, | 215D1 And beggar with beggar” – and for all other cases too, then, he said, it must necessarily be as in these that it is most of all the things that are most alike that are most filled with jealousy and rivalry towards each other, while the things that are most unlike must be filled with friendship: he said that the 215D5 poor person must necessarily be friend to the rich and the weak to the strong for the sake of getting their aid, and the ill person to the doctor, and that every person, in fact, who lacks knowledge must prize the one who possesses it, and love him. 215E1 And moreover he sallied out in what he said in even grander style, saying that in fact so far from its being the case that like was friend to like, it was precisely the opposite of that: it was what was most opposed that was most of all friend to what was most opposed to it. For, he said, what each 215E5 thing desires is that sort of thing, not what is like it: dry desires the wet, cold hot, bitter sweet, sharp dull, empty – filling, while the full, for its part, desires emptying, and so with the rest, along the same lines. For that which is opposed is nourishment to what is opposed to it; for what is like would derive no 216A1 benefit from like. And I can tell you, my friend, he also seemed to me a smart person, when he was saying this; for he spoke well. What about you two –’ I said: ‘how does he seem to do, in the view of the two of you, in what he says?’

‘Definitely well,’ said Menexenus, ‘or at any rate so it struck me, hearing it like that.’

‘Are we in that case to assert that it is opposite to opposite that is most 216A5 of all friends?’

‘Yes, certainly.’

‘Hold on,’ I said. ‘Isn’t that something bizarre, Menexenus? And won’t those super-wise individuals, the antilogicians, leap on us delightedly and ask us whether 216B1 enmity is something that’s most opposed to friendship? What shall we reply to them? Or mustn’t we necessarily agree that what they say is true?’

‘Necessarily we must.’

“So,” they’ll say, “is enemy friend to friend, or friend friend to enemy?”

‘Neither is so,’ he said.

“But is the just (a) friend to the unjust, or the 216B5 self-controlled to the licentious, or the good to the bad?”

‘It doesn’t seem to me it’d be like that.’

‘And yet,’ I said, ‘if it really were the case that a thing is friend to its friend with respect to their opposition, these too will necessarily be friends.’

'Necessarily.'

'In that case neither is like friend to like nor opposite to opposite.'

'It seems not.'

216C1 'But let's go on and consider this too, whether the friend isn't perhaps eluding us to a still greater extent, in truth being none of these things, but what is neither good nor bad simply, perhaps, becoming friend of the good.'

'How do you mean?' [Menexenus] said.

'Zeus!' I said. 'I don't **216C5** know – I'm dizzy myself at the impasse in the argument, and it looks as if, as the old proverb goes, "the beautiful is friend". At any rate it seems like something soft and smooth and slippery; **216D1** which is actually why, perhaps, it is easily slipping through our fingers and getting away from us, that is, because it's the sort of thing that does that. For I say that the good is beautiful; what about you – don't you think so?'

'I do.'

'Then I say – and here I'm speaking as a prophet – that it's the neither good nor bad that's friend of the beautiful and good; **216D5** and as for the things with a view to which I utter my prophecy, I'll tell you what they are. It seems to me that it's as if there are some three kinds of things, the good, the bad, and the neither good nor bad; what about you?'

'To me too,' he said.

'And that neither is the good friend to the good, nor the bad to the bad, nor the good **216E1** to the bad, just as the previous discussion too stopped us from saying; it remains, then, if indeed anything is friend to anything, that the neither good nor bad should be friend either of the good or of what is of the same sort as itself. For I don't suppose that anything would become friend to the bad.'

216E5 'True.'

'But neither would like become friend to like – we said so just now, didn't we?'

'Yes.'

'In that case what is of the same sort as the neither good nor bad won't be friend to the neither good nor bad.'

'It doesn't appear so.'

'In that case it turns out **217A1** that there's one thing, alone, to which one thing, alone, becomes friend: the neither good nor bad becomes friend to the good.'

'Necessarily, it seems.'

'So, you boys,' I said, 'is it also leading us in the right direction, what we're saying now? If at any rate we were to choose to consider the case of the

body 217A5 in healthy condition, it hasn't any need of medical expertise, or of assistance; for it's in sufficient condition, so that no one who's in a healthy condition is friend to doctor, because of his health. Right?"

'No one.'

'But the sick person *is*, I imagine, because of his sickness.'

'Obviously.'

217B1 'Sickness, then, is something bad, while medical expertise is something beneficial and good?"

'Yes.'

'Whereas I imagine a body, just insofar as it is a body, is neither good nor bad.'

'Just so.'

'But a body is compelled through sickness to embrace and love medical expertise.'

'It seems so to me.'

'The neither 217B5 bad nor good, in that case, becomes friend of the good because of presence of bad.'

'It appears so.'

'But, clearly, before it, itself, becomes bad under the agency of the bad it has. For once it had become bad 217C1 it certainly wouldn't any longer, to any degree, desire and be friend of the good; for we said it was impossible for bad to be friend to good.'

'Yes, impossible.'

'Consider, then, you two, what I'm saying. I'm saying that some things are themselves of such a sort as whatever it is that is present, while others are not. Just as, if 217C5 someone wanted to daub whatever it might be with a certain colour, the colour daubed on is I imagine present to the thing daubed.'

'Yes, absolutely.'

'Well then, is the thing daubed at that point of such a sort in colour as what is on it?'

217D1 'I don't understand,' he [Menexenus] said.

'It's like this,' I said: 'if someone daubed your hair, which is golden, with white lead, would it then be white, or appear white?'

'It would appear white,' he said.

'And at the same time whiteness would be *present* to it.'

'Yes.'

'But all the same 217D5 at that point your hair wouldn't any more *be* white than it was before; whiteness may be present, but your hair isn't at all either white or indeed black.'

'True.'

'But, my friend, at the point when old age brings this very same colour to your hair, *then* it becomes of such a sort as what is present, white by presence **217E1** of white.'

'Obviously.'

'Well then, that's what I'm asking just now: whether whatever a thing is present to, i.e. what has that thing present to it, will be of such a sort as what is present? Or will it be so if it's present in a certain way, and not if not?'

'More the latter,' he said.

'The neither bad nor good, then, too, is sometimes, **217E5** with bad present, not yet bad, while there are times when it has already become such a thing.'

'Yes, absolutely.'

'So then, when it isn't yet bad, but bad is present, *this* sort of presence makes it desire the good; but the presence that makes a thing bad deprives it at one and the same time both of its desire and of its friendship for the good. For it isn't any longer **218A1** neither bad nor good, but bad, and we agreed that bad wasn't friend to good.'

'No indeed.'

'It's just for these reasons that we'd say that those who are already wise, too, no longer love wisdom, whether these are gods or human beings; nor, again, would we say that those people love wisdom who have **218A5** ignorance in such a way as to *be* bad, for (we'd say) no person who is bad and ignorant loves wisdom. There remain, then, those who have this bad thing, ignorance, but are not yet lacking in sense through its agency, nor **218B1** ignorant, but still think themselves not to know what they don't know. Which gives us, then, that those who do love wisdom are those who are as yet neither good nor bad, while as many as are bad don't love wisdom, and neither do the good; for it became clear to us in what we said before that neither is the opposite friend of its **218B5** opposite nor the like of its like. Or don't the two of you recall?'

'Yes, absolutely,' they both said.

'Now, in that case,' I said, 'Lysis and Menexenus, we've absolutely and completely found out what the friend is and isn't. For what we assert about it, both in respect of the soul and in respect of the **218C1** body, and everywhere else, is that the neither bad nor good is friend of the good because of presence of bad.'

They both said they were absolutely in agreement that it was like this.

And what's more I myself, too, was overjoyed, like a sort of hunter, **218C5** at having adequately enough in my grasp what I was hunting for. And then,

I don't know where from, the oddest sort of suspicion came into my mind that what we'd agreed wasn't true, and immediately feeling agitated, I said 'Oh dear! Lysis and Menexenus, it looks as if our riches were only a dream.'

218D1 'Why exactly?' said Menexenus.

'I fear,' I said, 'that it's as if we'd met some people who were impostors – that we've fallen in with a form of words about the friend that are something like that.'

218D5 'How's *that*?'

'Like this,' I said: 'the person who'll be friend: is he or is he not friend to something?'

'Necessarily,' he said.

'Will it be for the sake of nothing, and because of nothing, or for the sake of something and because of something?'

'For the sake of something and because of something.'

'That thing – for the sake of which the friend is friend **218D10** to the friend – being friend, or neither friend nor enemy?'

218E1 'I don't understand at all,' he said.

'That's reasonable enough,' I said; 'but if I put it another way, perhaps you'll follow, and I believe I'll understand more myself what I'm saying: the sick person, we were saying just now, is friend of the doctor; isn't that so?'

'Yes.'

'Is it then because of sickness, for the sake of health, that he's friend of the **218E5** doctor?'

'Yes.'

'But sickness is a bad thing?'

'Of course.'

'What about health?' I said; 'is it a good thing, or a bad thing, or neither of the two?'

'A good thing,' **219A1** he said.

'So then what we were saying, it seems, was that the body, which is neither good nor bad, because of the sickness, that is, because of the bad, is friend of medical expertise, and medical expertise is a good thing; but that it's for the sake of health that the medical expertise has become the object of the friendship, and health is a good thing. **219A5** Is that right?'

'Yes.'

'And is the health something that's a friend or something that's not a friend?'

'A friend.'

'And the sickness is something that's inimical.'

'Yes, absolutely.'

'So then the neither **219B1** bad nor good, because of the bad and inimical, is friend of the good for the sake of the good and friend.'

'It appears so.'

'So then it's for the sake of the friend that the friend is friend, because of the inimical.'

'It seems so.'

219B5 'Well then,' I said: 'now that we've got here, boys, let's pay attention to avoid our being deceived. I let pass that the friend has turned out to be friend of the friend, and that like turns out to be friend of *like*, which we say is impossible; but for all that, let's consider the following, to prevent what we are saying now from deceiving **219C1** us. Medical expertise, we say, is a friend for the sake of health.'

'Yes.'

'Is health too, then, a friend?'

'Yes, absolutely.'

'So then, if it's a friend, it's for the sake of something.'

'Yes.'

'For the sake of some *friend*, then, if it's going to conform to our previous agreement.'

'Yes, absolutely.'

'And then again, that too, in its turn, will be **219C5** friend for the sake of a friend?'

'Yes.'

'Won't we then necessarily wear ourselves out if we go on like this, and won't we have to arrive at some beginning, which will no longer refer to another friend, but will have come to that thing which is **219D1** a friend first, for the sake of which we say that the other things too, all of them, are friends?'

'Agreed: necessarily.'

'This, then is what I'm saying, that we must beware of all those other things that we said were friends, for the sake of *that* one, that like some sort of images of it they don't deceive us, when that first one is what is **219D5** truly friend. Let's look at it like this. Whenever anyone makes much of anything, as for example sometimes a father prefers a son to all his other things: that sort of person, for the sake of thinking **219E1** everything of the son – would he also make much of some other thing too? As for example if he noticed that he'd drunk hemlock, would he make much of wine, if he really thought this would save the son?'

'Of course,' [Menexenus] said.

'So of any vessel the **219E5** wine was in, too?'

'Yes, absolutely.'

'Then does he under these circumstances make no more of anything, a ceramic cup or his own son, or again three measures of wine or the son? Or is it something like this: all the concern in such cases isn't expended on the things that are procured for the sake of something, but on the thing for the sake of which all **220A1** such things are procured?

'This isn't to deny that we often say we make much of gold and silver, but I venture that that doesn't make it any *truer*; that other thing is what we make everything of, whatever it comes to light as being, for the sake of which both **220A5** gold and all the other things that are procured are procured. Shall we assert it to be like this?'

'Yes, absolutely.'

'Then does the same account apply to the friend, too? For as often as we say things are friends to us for the sake of some other **220B1** friend, it's plainly just a word we're using when we say it; and what is really a friend seems likely to be that very thing to which these so-called "friendships" finally lead.'

'It does seem likely to be like this,' he said.

'So what is *really* a friend is not a friend for the sake of some **220B5** friend?'

'True.'

'This, then, we're rid of, that the friend is friend for the sake of some friend; but is the good a friend?'

'It seems so to me.'

'Is it then because of the bad that the good is loved, **220C1** and is it like this: if of the three things we were talking about just now, good, bad, and neither good nor bad, two were still left, but the third, the bad, were to take itself off out of the way and affected nothing, whether body, or soul, or the other things, the ones we say, themselves **220C5** in themselves, are neither bad nor good, is it the case that then the good would not be useful to us at all, but would have become useless? For if nothing any longer harmed us, we wouldn't need **220D1** any help at all, and in this way, given those circumstances, it would become manifest that it was because of the bad that we were attracted by and loved the good, on the basis that the good was a cure for the bad, and the bad a sickness; and if there's no sickness there's no need for a cure. Is the nature **220D5** of the good like this, and is it loved like this, because of the bad, by us who are between the bad and the good, and does it have no use, itself for the sake of itself?'

'It seems,' [Menexenus] said, 'to be like that.'

'In that case we find that that friend of ours, the one to which we said all the rest finally led **220E1** – "friends' for the sake of another friend" was what we said they were – doesn't resemble them at all. For these have the name "friends for the sake of a friend", whereas the true friend plainly has a nature that's wholly the opposite of this; for it showed up as plainly being a friend to us for the sake of something inimical, and if the inimical **220E5** took itself off it's no longer, it seems, a friend to us.'

'It doesn't seem so to me,' he said, 'as least if it's put as it is now.'

'Good heavens ['By Zeus!'],' I said, 'if bad disappears, will there no longer even be any being hungry, or **221A1** being thirsty, or anything else of that sort? Or will there be hunger, if indeed there are human beings and the other sorts of living creatures, but not hunger that is *harmful*? And so with thirst, and the other sorts of desires – there will be these desires, but they won't be bad, given that bad will have disappeared? Or is the question "What, I wonder, **221A5** will there be or not be under those circumstances?" ridiculous? For who knows the answer? This much in any case we do know, that even as things are it is possible to be hungry and to be harmed, and possible too to be hungry and to be benefited. Isn't that so?'

'Yes, absolutely.'

'Then it's possible also to be thirsty and **221B1** to desire any of the other things of this sort and sometimes to desire them beneficially, sometimes harmfully, and sometimes neither?'

'Yes, very much so.'

'Then if bad things disappear, the sorts of things that actually aren't bad – why does it belong to them to disappear along **221B5** with the bad?'

'It doesn't at all.'

'In that case there will be the neither good nor bad desires even if bad things disappear.'

'It appears so.'

'Well, is it possible for a person desiring, and feeling passion for, the thing he desires and feels passion for not to love?'

'It doesn't seem so to me.'

'In that case even if **221C1** bad things had disappeared, it seems, there will be some friends.'

'Yes.'

'There wouldn't be, if the bad really were cause of a thing's being a friend – one thing wouldn't be a friend to another, if that had disappeared. For once a cause has disappeared I imagine it would be impossible for that thing of which this cause was cause still **221C5** to be there.'

'What you say is correct.'

'Well then, hasn't it been agreed by us that the friend loves something, and because of something; and didn't we think, at *that* point, that it was because of the bad that the neither good nor bad loved the good?'

'True.'

221D1 'But now, it seems, another sort of cause of loving and being loved is appearing.'

'It does seem so.'

'So is it in fact the case, as we were saying just now, that desire is cause of friendship, and that what desires is friend to that thing it desires and at such time that it desires it, and that what **221D5** we were previously saying being a friend was, was some kind of nonsense, like a poem that's been badly put together?'

'Quite likely.'

'But', I said, 'what desires, desires whatever it's **221E1** lacking. Isn't that so?'

'Yes.'

'And what is lacking, in that case, is friend of whatever it's lacking?'

'It seems so to me.'

'And what becomes lacking is whatever has something taken away from it.'

'Of course.'

'It's what belongs to us, then, that's actually the object of passion and friendship and desire, as it appears, **221E5** Menexenus and Lysis.'

The two of them assented.

'The two of you, in that case, if you're friends to each other, in some way naturally belong the one to the other.'

'No doubt about it,' they said together.

'And if, then, any one person desires any other,' I said, **222A1** 'you boys, or feels passion for him, he wouldn't ever desire, or feel passion, or love, if he didn't actually in some way belong to the one he is feeling passion for, either in relation to the soul or in relation to some characteristic of the soul, or ways or form.'

'Absolutely so,' said Menexenus; but Lysis said nothing.

'Very well. **222A5** What naturally belongs to us, then – it's become evident to us that it's necessary to love it.'

'It seems so,' he [Menexenus?] said.

'It's necessary, in that case, for the genuine lover, one who's not pretended, to be loved by his darling.'

222B1 At that Lysis and Menexenus barely somehow nodded assent, but there was no mistaking Hippothales' pleasure, which made him go all sorts of colours.

And I said, wanting to take a look at the argument, 'If belonging is different from being like, then we'd be saying something worth saying, so **222B5** it seems to me, Lysis and Menexenus, about what a friend is; but if it's actually the case that they're the same thing, like and belonging, it's not easy to discard our previous argument to the effect that like was useless to like with respect to their likeness, and to concede that what is useless **222C1** is a friend strikes a false note. So are you prepared,' I said, 'since we're intoxicated with our argument, that we should agree to say that belonging is something different from being like?'

'Yes, absolutely.'

'Shall we then also lay it down that the good belongs to everyone, and the bad is **222C5** alien? Or that the bad belongs to the bad, to the good the good, and to the neither good nor bad the neither good nor bad?'

They both said it seemed to them like this, that each **222D1** belongs to each.

'In that case,' I said, 'we've fallen back into things said about friendship that we discarded the first time round; for the unjust person will be friend to the unjust and the bad to the bad no less than the good to the good.'

222D5 'It appears so,' he [Menexenus?] said.

'And what's more, if we say that being good and belonging are the same thing, won't the good person be friend only to the good?'

'Yes, absolutely.'

'And yet we thought we had refuted that too, ourselves; or don't you remember?'

'We remember.'

222E1 'What use, then, could we still make of our argument? Or is it clear that there wouldn't be any? So I need, like experts in the law-courts, to go back over everything that's been said: if neither those who are loved nor those who love nor the like nor the unlike nor the good **222E5** nor those who belong nor all the other things we've gone through – for I for one don't any longer remember, there were so many of them, but anyway if none of these things is friend, I no longer have any idea what to say.'

223A1 When I'd said that, I had it in mind at that point to disturb some other member of the older set; and then the guardians came up, like gods of some sort, Menexenus' and Lysis' guardians, with the boys' brothers with them, and called out to tell them to leave **223A5** for home (for by now it was late). Now at first both we and the people standing around tried to

fend them off; but when they took no notice of us, addressed us angrily in broken Greek and **223B1** went on calling the boys just the same, and what's more looked to us difficult to engage with having had a bit to drink at the Hermaea festival – well, we gave in to them and broke up our get-together. But all the same I did get in, even as they were in the process of leaving, ‘Now just look at us, Lysis and Menexenus! We’ve made **223B5** ourselves ridiculous, I, an old man, and you too. For these people here will say as they leave that we think that we’re friends of one another – for I count myself too as one of you – but haven’t yet been able to find out what the friend *is*.’

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